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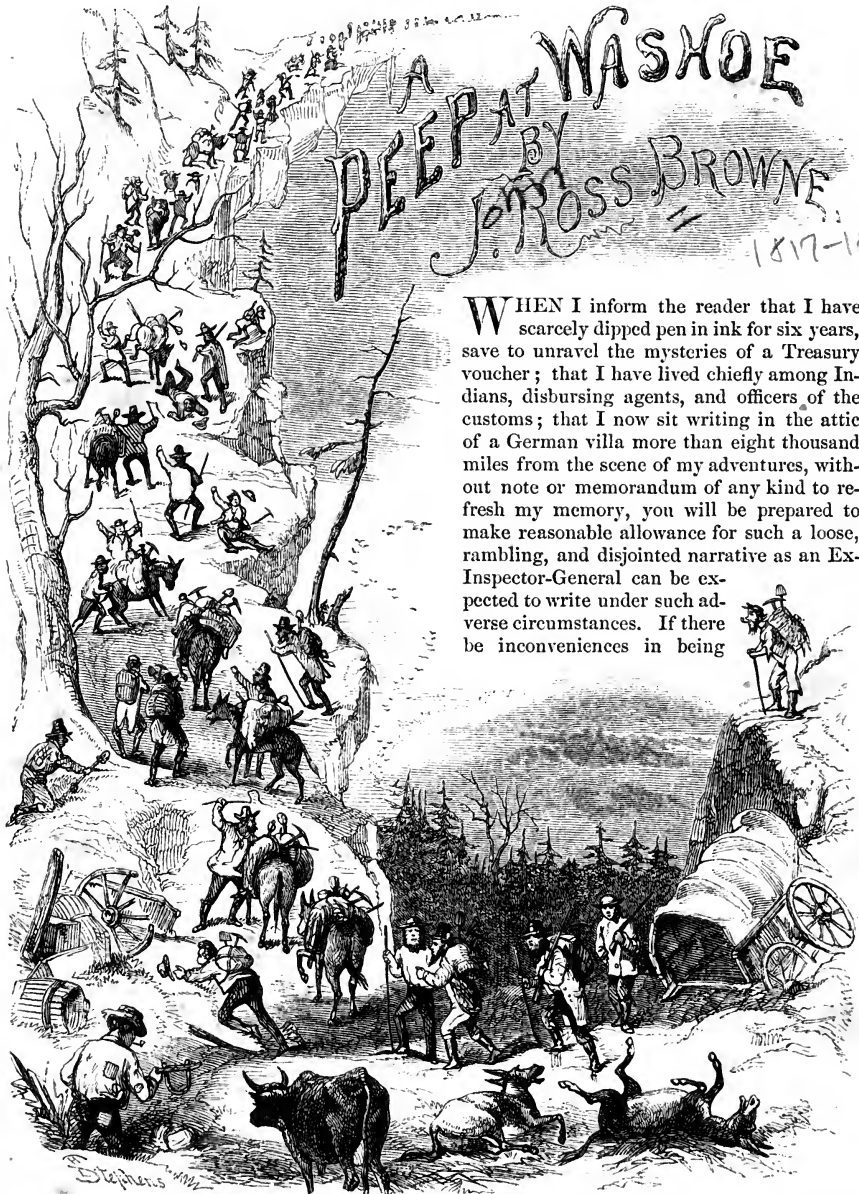
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[First Paper.]



WHEN I inform the reader that I have scarcely dipped pen in ink for six years, save to unravel the mysteries of a Treasury voucher; that I have lived chiefly among Indians, disbursing agents, and officers of the customs; that I now sit writing in the attic of a German villa more than eight thousand miles from the scene of my adventures, without note or memorandum of any kind to refresh my memory, you will be prepared to make reasonable allowance for such a loose, rambling, and disjointed narrative as an Ex-Inspector-General can be expected to write under such adverse circumstances. If there be inconveniences in being

hanged, as the gentle Elia has attempted to prove, so likewise are there inconveniences in being decapitated; for surely a man deprived of the casket which nature has given him as a receptacle for his brains, is no better off than one with a broken neck. But it is not my present purpose to enter into an analysis of this portion of my experience. Nor do I make these references to official life by way of excuse for any rustiness of intellect that may be perceptible in my narrative; but rather in mitigation of those unconscious violations of truth and marvelous flights of fancy which may naturally result from long experience in Government affairs.

Ever since 1849, when I first trod the shores of California, the citizens of that Land of Promise have been subject to periodical excitements, the extent and variety of which can find no parallel in any other State of the Union. To enumerate these in chronological detail would be a difficult task, nor is it necessary to my purpose. The destruction of towns by flood and fire; the uprisings and downfallings of Vigilance Committees; the breaking of banking-houses and pecuniary ruin of thousands; the political wars, Senatorial tournaments, duels, and personal affairs; the Prison and Bulkhead schemes; the extraordinary ovations to the living and the dead, and innumerable other excitements, have been too frequently detailed, and have elicited too much comment from the Atlantic press, not to be still in the memory of the public.

But numerous as these agitations have been, and prejudicial as some of them must long continue to be to the reputation of the State, they can bear no comparison in point of extent and general interest to the mining excitements which from time to time have convulsed the whole Pacific coast, from Puget's Sound to San Diego. In these there can be no occasion for party animosity; they are confined to no political or sectional clique; all the industrial classes are interested, and in a manner too, affecting, either directly or incidentally, their very means of subsistence. The country abounds in mineral wealth, and the merchant, the banker, the shipper, the mechanic, the laborer, are all to some extent dependent upon its development. Even the gentleman of elegant leisure, vulgarly known as the "Bummer"—and there are many in California—is occasionally driven by visions of cock-tail and cigar-money to doff his "stove-pipe," and exchange his gold-mounted cane for a pick or a shovel. The axiom has been well established by an eminent English writer, that "Every man wants a thousand pounds." It seems indeed to be a chronic and constitutional want, as well in California as in less favored countries.

Few of the early residents of the State can have forgotten the Gold Bluff excitement of '52, when by all accounts old Ocean himself turned miner, and washed up cart-loads of gold on the beach above Trinidad. It was represented, and generally believed, that any enterprising man could take his hat and a wheel-barrow and in half an hour gather up gold enough to last him



THE BUMMER.

for life. I have reason to suspect that, of the thousands who went there, many will long remember their experience with emotions, if pleasant "yet mournful to the soul."

The Kern River excitement threatened for a time to depopulate the northern portion of the State. The stages from Marysville and Sacramento were crowded day after day, and new lines were established from Los Angeles, Stockton, San José, and various other points; but such was the pressure of travel in search of this grand depository, in which it was represented the main wealth of the world had been treasured by a beneficent Providence, that thousands were compelled to go on foot and carry their blankets and provisions on their backs. From Stockton to the mining district, a distance of more than three hundred miles, the plains of the San Joaquin were literally speckled with "honest miners." It is a notable fact, that, of those who went in stages, the majority returned on foot; and of those who trusted originally to shoe-leather, many had to walk back on their natural soles, or depend on sackcloth or charity.

After the Kern River Exchequer had been exhausted the public were congratulated by the press throughout the State upon the effectual check now put upon these ruinous and extrava-

Scarcely had the reverberation caused by the bursting of the Kern River bubble died away, and fortune again smiled upon the ruined multitudes, when a faint cry was heard from afar—first low and uncertain, like a mysterious whisper, then full and sonorous, like the boom of glad tidings from the mouth of a cannon, the inspiring cry of FRAZER RIVER! Here was gold sure enough!—a river of gold!—a country that dazzled the eyes with its glitter of gold. There was no deception about it this time. New Caledonia was the land of Ophir. True, it was in the British possessions, but what of that? The people of California would develop the British possessions. Had our claim to 54°40' been insisted upon, this immense treasure would now have been within our own boundaries; but no matter—it was ours by right of proximity! The problem of Solomon's Temple was now solved. Travelers, from Marco Polo down to the present era, who had attempted to find the true land of Ophir had signally failed; but here it was, the exact locality, beyond peradventure. For where else in the world could the river-beds, creeks, and cañons be lined with gold? Where else could the honest miner "pan out" \$100 per day every day in the year? But if any who had been rendered incredulous by former excitements still doubted,

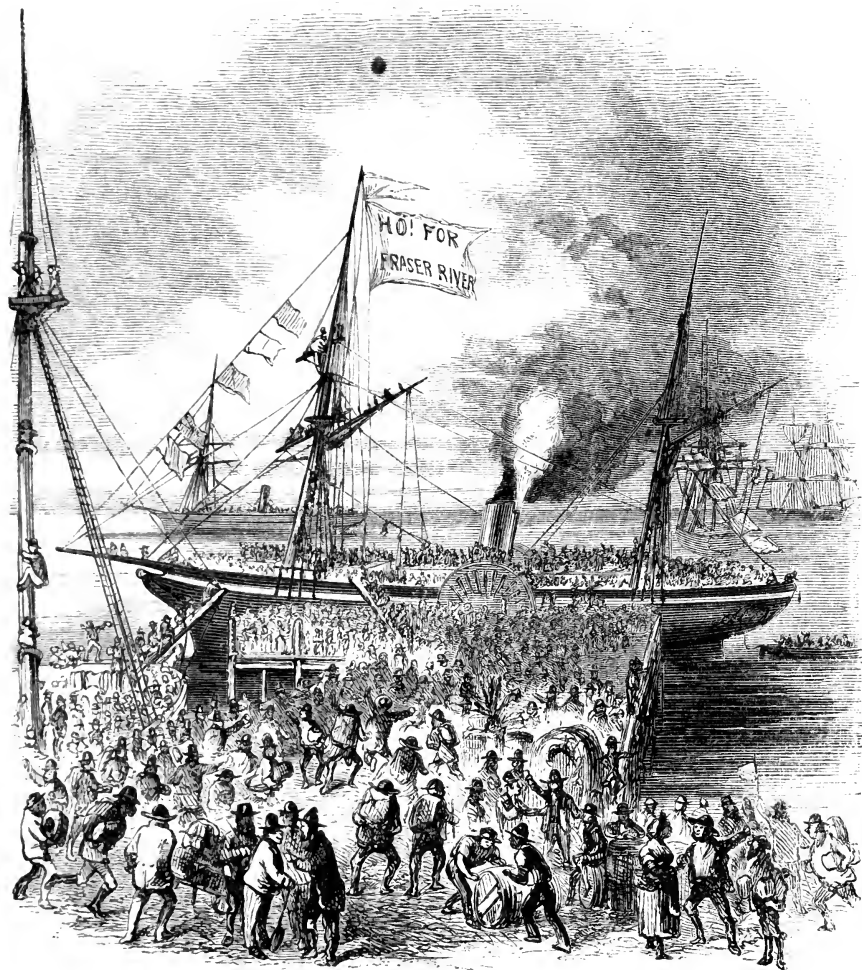


GOING TO KERN RIVER.

gant excitements. The enterprising miners who had been tempted to abandon good claims in search of better had undergone a species of purging which would allay any irritation of the mucous membrane for some time. What they had lost in money they had gained in experience. They would henceforth turn a deaf ear to interested representations, and not be dazzled by visions of sudden wealth conjured up by monte-dealers, travelers, and horse-jockeys. They were, on the whole, wiser if not happier men. Nor would the lesson be lost to the merchants and capitalists who had scattered their goods and their funds over the picturesque heights of the Sierra Nevada. And even the gentlemen of elegant leisure, who had gone off so suddenly in search of small change for liquors and cigars, could now recuperate their exhausted energies at the free lunch establishments of San Francisco, or if too far gone in seed for that, they could regenerate their muscular system by some wholesome exercise in the old diggings, where there was not so much gold perhaps as at Kern River, but where it could be got at more easily.



RETURNING FROM KERN RIVER.



HO! FOR FRAZER RIVER.

they could no longer discredit the statements that were brought down by every steamer, accompanied by positive and palpable specimens of the ore, and by the assurances of captains, pursers, mates, cooks, and waiters, that Frazer River was the country. To be sure, it was afterward hinted that the best part of the gold brought down from Frazer had made the round voyage from San Francisco; but I consider this a gross and unwarranted imputation upon the integrity of steamboat owners, captains, and speculators. Did not the famous Commodore Wright take the matter in hand; put his best steamers on the route; hoist his banners and placards in every direction, and give every man a chance of testing the question in person? This was establishing the existence of immense mineral wealth in that region upon a firm and practical basis. No man of judgment and experience, like the Commodore, would undertake to run his steamers on

“the baseless fabric of a vision.” The cheapness and variety of his rates afforded every man an opportunity of making a fortune. For thirty, twenty, and even fifteen dollars, the ambitious aspirant for Frazer could be landed at Victoria.

I will not now undertake to give a detail of that memorable excitement; how the stages, north, south, east, and, I had almost said, west, were crowded day and night with scores upon scores of sturdy adventurers; how farms were abandoned and crops lost for want of hands to work them; how rich claims in the old diggings were given away for a song; how the wharves of San Francisco groaned under the pressure of the human freight delivered upon them on every arrival of the Sacramento and Stockton boats; how it was often impracticable to get through the streets in that vicinity owing to the crowds gathered around the “runners,” who cried aloud the merits and demerits of the

rival steamers; and, strangest of all, how the head and front of the Frazerites were the very men who had enjoyed such pleasant experience at Gold Bluff, Kern River, and other places famous in the history of California. No sensible man could doubt the richness of Frazer River when these veterans became leaders, and called upon the masses to follow. They were not a class of men likely to be deceived—they knew the signs of the times. And, in addition to all this, who could resist the judgment and experience of Commodore Wright, a man who had made an independent fortune in the steamboat business? Who could be deaf when assayers, bankers, jobbers, and speculators cried aloud that it was all true?

Well, I am not going to moralize. Mr. Nugent was appointed a Commissioner, on the part of the United States, to settle the various difficulties which had grown up between the miners and Governor Douglass. He arrived at Victoria in time to perform signal service to his fellow-citizens; that is to say, he found many of them in a state of starvation, and sent them back to California at public expense. Frazer River, always too high for mining purposes, could not be prevailed upon to subside. Its banks were not banks of issue, nor were its beds stuffed with the feathers of the Golden Goose. Had it not been for this turn of affairs it is difficult to say what would have been the result. The British Lion had been slumbering undisturbed at Victoria for half a century, and was very much astonished, upon waking up, to find thirty thousand semi-barbarous Californians scattered broadcast over the British possessions. Governor Douglass issued manifestoes in vain. He evidently thought it no joke. The subject eventually became a matter of diplomatic correspondence, in which much ink was shed, but fortunately no blood; although the subsequent seizure of San Juan by General Harney came very near producing that result.

The steamers in due course of time began to return crowded with enterprising miners, who still believed there was gold there if the river would only fall. But generosity dictates that I should say no more on this point. It is enough to add, that the time arrived when it became a matter of personal offense to ask any spirited gentleman if he had been to Frazer River.

There was now, of course, an end to all mining excitements. It could never again happen that such an imposition could be practiced upon public credulity. In the whole State there was not another sheep that could be gulled by the cry of wolf. Business would now resume its steady and legitimate course. Property would cease to fluctuate in value. Every branch of industry would become fixed upon a permanent and reliable basis. All these excitements were the natural results of the daring and enterprising character of the people. But now, having worked off their superabundant steam, they would be prepared to go ahead systematically, and develop those resources which they had hitherto neg-



RETURNED FROM FRAZER RIVER.

lected. It was a course of medical effervescence highly beneficial to the body politic. All morbid appetite for sudden wealth was now gone forever.

But softly, good friends! What rumor is this? Whence come these silvery strains that are wafted to our ears from the passes of the Sierra Nevada? What dulcet Æolian harmonies—what divine, enchanting ravishment is it

“That with these raptures moves the vocal air?”

As I live, it is a cry of Silver! Silver in WASHOE! Not gold now, you silly men of Gold Bluff; you Kern-Riverites; you daring explorers of British Columbia! But SILVER—solid, pure SILVER! Beds of it ten thousand feet deep! Acres of it!—miles of it!—hundreds of millions of dollars poking their backs up out of the earth ready to be pocketed!

Do you speak of the mines of Potosi or Golconda? Do you dare to quote the learned Baron Von Tschudi on South America and Mexico? Do you refer me to the ransom of Atahualpa, the unfortunate Inca, in the days of Pizarro? Nothing at all, I assure you, to the silver mines of Washoe! “Sir,” said my informant to me, in strict confidence, no later than this morning, “you may rely upon it, for I am personally acquainted with a brother of the gentleman whose most intimate friend saw the man whose partner has just come over the mountains, and he says there never was the like on the face of the earth! The ledges are ten thousand feet deep—solid



HURRAH FOR WASHOE!

masses of silver. Let us be off! Now is the time! A pack-mule, pick and shovel, hammer and frying-pan will do. You need nothing more. HURRAH FOR WASHOE!"

Kind and sympathizing reader, imagine a man who for six years had faithfully served his government and his country; who had never, if he knew himself intimately, embezzled a dollar of the public funds; who had resisted the seductive influences of Gold Bluff, Kern, and Frazer Rivers, from the purest motives of patriotism; who scorned to abandon his post in search of filthy lucre—imagine such a personage cut short in his official career, and suddenly bereft of his per diem by a formal and sarcastic note of three lines from head-quarters; then fancy you hear him jingle the last of his Federal emoluments in his pocket, and sigh at the ingratitude of republics. Would you not consider him open to any proposition short of murder or highway robbery?

Would you be surprised if he accepted an invitation from Mr. Wise, the aeronaut, to take a voyage in a balloon? or the berth of assistant-manager in a diving-bell? or joined the first expedition in search of the treasure buried by the Spanish galleon on her voyage to Acapulco in 1578? Then consider his position, as he stands musing upon the mutability of human affairs, when those strange and inspiring cries of Washoe fall upon his ears for the first time, with a realizing sense of their import. Borne on the wings of the wind from the Sierra Nevada; wafted through every street, lane, and alley of San Francisco; whirling around the drinking-saloons, eddying over the counters of the banking-offices, scattering up the dust among the Front Street merchants, arousing the slumbering inmates of the Custom-house—what man of enterprise could resist it? Washoe! The Comstock lead! The Ophir! The Central—The Billy

Choller Companies, and a thousand others, indicating in trumpet-tones the high road to fortune! From the crack of day to the shades of night nothing is heard but Washoe. The steady men of San Francisco are aroused, the men of Front Street, the gunny-bag men, the brokers, the gamblers, the butchers, the bakers, the whisky-dealers, the lawyers, and all. The exception was to find a sane man in the entire city.

No wonder the abstracted personage already referred to was aroused from his gloomy reflections. A friend appealed to him to go to Washoe. The friend was interested there, but could not go himself. It was a matter of incalculable importance. Millions were involved in it. He (the friend) would pay expenses. The business would not occupy a week, and would not interfere with any other business.



WASHOE AGENCY.

Next day an advertisement appeared in the city papers, respectfully inviting the public to commit their claims and investments to the hands of their fellow-citizen, Mr. Yusef Badra, whose long experience in Government affairs eminently qualified him to undertake the task of geological research. He was especially prepared to determine the exact amount of silver contained in fossils. It would afford him pleasure to be of service to his friends and fellow-citizens. The public would be so kind as to address Mr. Badra, at Carson City, Territory of Utah.

This looked like business on an extensive scale. It read like business of a scientific character. It was a card drawn up with skill, and calculated to attract attention. I am proud to acknowledge that I am the author, and, further-

more (if you will consider the information confidential), that I am the identical agent referred to.

Many good friends shook their heads when I announced my intention of visiting Washoe, and although they designed going themselves as soon as the snow was melted from the mountains, they could not understand how a person who had so long retained his faculties unimpaired could give up a lucrative government office and engage in such a wild-geese chase as that. Little did they know of the brief but irritating document which I carried in my pocket, and for which I am determined some day or other to write a satire against our system of government. I bade them a kindly farewell, and on a fine evening, toward the latter part of March, took my departure for Sacramento, there to take the stage for Placerville, and from that point as fortune might direct.

My stock in trade consisted of two pair of blankets, a spare shirt, a plug of tobacco, a notebook, and a paint-box. On my arrival in Placerville I found the whole town in commotion. There was not an animal to be had at any of the stables without applying three days in advance. The stage for Strawberry had made its last trip in consequence of the bad condition of the road. Every hotel and restaurant was full to overflowing. The streets were blocked up with crowds of adventurers all bound for Washoe. The gambling and drinking saloons were crammed to suffocation with customers practicing for Washoe. The clothing stores were covered with placards offering to sell goods at ruinous sacrifices to Washoe miners. The forwarding houses and express offices were overflowing with goods and packages marked for Washoe. The grocery stores were making up boxes, bags, and bundles of groceries for the Washoe trade. The stables were constantly starting off passenger and pack trains for Washoe. Mexican *vaqueros* were driving headstrong mules through the streets on the road to Washoe. The newspapers were full of Washoe. In short, there was nothing but Washoe to be seen, heard, or thought of. Every arrival from the mountains confirmed the glad tidings that enormous quantities of silver were being discovered daily in Washoe. Any man who wanted a fortune needed only to go over there and pick it up. There was Jack Smith, who made ten thousand dollars the other day at a single trade; and Tom Jenkins, twenty thousand by right of discovery; and Bill Brown, forty thousand in the tavern business, and so on. Every body was getting rich "hand over fist." It was the place for fortunes. No man could go amiss. I was in search of just such a place. It suited me to find a fortune ready made. Like Professor Agassiz, I could not afford to make money, but it would be no inconvenience to draw a check on the great Washoe depository for fifty thousand dollars or so, and proceed on my travels. I would visit Japan, ascend the Amoor River, traverse Tartary, spend a few weeks in Siberia, rest a day or so at St. Petersburg, cross

through Russia to the Black Sea, visit Persia, Nineveh, and Bagdad, and wind up somewhere in Italy. I even began to look about the bar-rooms for a map in order to lay out the route more definitely, but the only map to be seen was De Groot's outline of the route from Placerville to Washoe. I went to bed rather tired after the excitement of the day and somewhat surfeited with Washoe. Presently I heard a tap at the door, a head was popped through the opening.



"I SAY, CAP!"

"I say, Cap!"

"Well, what do you say?"

"Are you the man that can't get a animal for Washoe?"

"Yes, have you got one to sell or hire?"

"No, I hain't got one myself, but me and my pardner is going to walk there, and if you like you can jine our party."

"Thank you, I have a friend who is going with me, but I shall be very glad to have more company."

"All right, Cap; good-night."

The door was closed, but presently opened again,

"I say, Cap!"

"What now?"

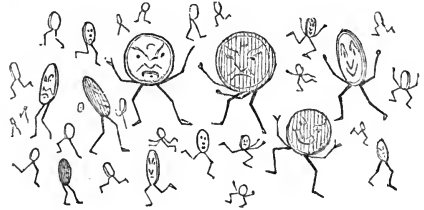
"Do you believe in Washoe?"

"Of course; why not?"

"Well, I suppose it's all right. Good-night,

I'm in." And my new friend left me to my slumbers.

But who could slumber in such a bedlam, where scores and hundreds of crack-brained people kept rushing up and down the passage all night, in and out of every room, banging the doors after them, calling for boots, carpet-sacks, cards, cock-tails, and toddies; while amidst the ceaseless din arose ever and anon that potent cry of "Washoe!" which had unsettled every brain. I turned over and over for the fiftieth time, and at length fell into an uneasy doze. A mountain seemed to rise before me. Millions of rats with human faces were climbing up its sides, some burrowing into holes, some rolling down into bottomless pits, but all labeled Washoe. Soon the mountain began to shake its sides with suppressed laughter, and out of a volcano on the top burst sheets of flame, through which jumped ten thousand grotesque figures in the shape of dollars with spider legs, shrieking with all their might, "Washoe! ho! ho! Washoe! ho! ho!"



Surely the sounds were wonderfully real. Tap, tap, at the door.

"I say, Cap!"

"Well, what is it?"

"'Bout time to get up if you calklate to make Pete's ranch to-night."

So I got up, and after a cup of coffee took a ramble on the heights, where I was amply compensated for my loss of rest by the richness and beauty of the sunrise. It was still early spring; the hills were covered with verdure; flowers bloomed in all directions; pleasant little cottages, scattered here and there, gave a civilized aspect to the scene, and when I looked over the busy town, and heard the lively rattle of stages, wagons, and buggies, and saw the long pack-trains winding their way up the mountains, I felt proud of California and her people. There is not a prettier little town in the State than Placerville, and certainly not a better class of people any where than her thriving inhabitants. They seemed, indeed, to be so well satisfied with their own mining prospects that they were the least excited of the crowd on the subject of the new discoveries. The impulse given to business in the town, however, was well calculated to afford them satisfaction. This was the last dépôt of trade on the way to Washoe. My excellent friend Dan Gelwicks, of the *Mountain Democrat*, assured me that he was perfectly satisfied to spend the remainder of his days in Placerville. Who that has ever visited the mountains, or attended a political convention in Sacramento,



"GO IT, WASHOE!"

does not know the immortal "Dan"—the truest, best-hearted, handsomest fellow in existence; the very cream and essence of a country editor; who dresses as he pleases, chews tobacco when he pleases, writes tremendous political philippics, knows every body, trusts every body, sets up his own editorials, and on occasions stands ready to do the job and press-work! I am indebted to "Dan" for the free use of his sanctum; and in consideration of his kindness and hospitality, do hereby transfer to him all my right, title, and interest in the Roaring Jack Claim, Wild-Cat Ledge, Devil's Gate, which by this time must be worth ten thousand dollars a foot.

Before we were quite ready to start our party had increased to five; but as each had to purchase a knife, tin cup, pound of cheese, or some other article of luxury, it was ten o'clock before we got fairly under way. And here I must say that, although our appearance as we passed along the main street of Placerville elicited no higher token of admiration than "Go it, Washoe!" such a party, habited and accoutred as we were, would have made a profound sensation in Hyde Park, London, or even on Broadway, New York.

The road was in good condition, barring a little mud in the neighborhood of "Hangtown;" and the day was exceedingly bright and pleasant. As I ascended the first considerable elevation in the succession of heights which extend all the way for a distance of fifty miles to the summit of the Sierra Nevada, and cast a look back over the foot-hills, a more glorious scene of gigantic forests, open valleys, and winding streams seldom greeted my vision. The air was singularly

pure and bracing—every draught of it was equal to a glass of sparkling Champagne. At intervals, varying from fifty yards to half a mile, streams of water of crystal clearness and icy coolness burst from the mountain sides, making a pleasant music as they crossed the road. Whether the day was uncommonly warm, or the exercise rather heating, or the packs very heavy, it was beyond doubt some of the party were afflicted with a chronic thirst, for they stopped to drink at every spring and rivulet on the way, giving rise to a suspicion in my mind that they had not been much accustomed to that wholesome beverage of late. This suspicion was strengthened by a mysterious circumstance. I had lagged behind at a turn of the road to adjust my pack, when I was approached by the unique personage whose head in the door-way had startled me the night before.

"I say, Cap!" At the same time pulling from the folds of his blanket a dangerous-looking "pocket pistol," he put the muzzle to his mouth and discharged the main portion of the contents down his throat.

"What d'ye say, Cap?"

Now I claim to be under no legal obligation to state what I said or did on that occasion; but this much I am willing to avow: that upon resuming our journey there was a glorious sense of freedom and independence in our adventurous mode of life. The fresh air, odorous with the scent of pine forests and wild flowers; the craggy rocks overhung with the grape and the morning glory; the merry shouts of the Mexican *raqueros*, mingled with the wild dashing of the



THE POCKET PISTOL.

river down the cañon on our right; the free exercise of every muscle; the consciousness of exemption from all further restraints of office, were absolutely inspiring. I think a lyrical poem would not have exceeded my powers on that occasion. Every faculty seemed invigorated to the highest pitch of perfection. Hang the dignity of office! A murrain upon party politicians and inspector-generals! To the bottomless pit with all vouchers, abstracts, and accounts current! I scorn that meagre and brainless style of the heads of the Executive Departments, "SIR,—Your services are no longer—" What dunce could not write a more copious letter than that? Who would be a slave when all nature calls upon him in trumpet-tones to be free? Who would sell his birth-right for a mess of pottage, when he could lead the life of an honest miner—earn his bread by the sweat of his brow—breathe the fresh air of heaven without stint or limit? And of all miners in the world, who would not be a Washoe miner? Beyond question this was a condition of mind to be envied and admired; and, notwithstanding the two pair of heavy blankets on my back, and a stiff pair of boots on my feet that gall-

ed my ankles most grievously, I really felt lighter and brighter than for years past. Nor did it seem surprising to me then that so many restless men should abandon the haunts of civilization and seek variety and freedom in the wilderness of rugged mountains comprising the mining districts of the Sierra Nevada. The life of the miner is one of labor, peril, and exposure; but it possesses the fascinating element of liberty, and the promise of unlimited reward. In the midst of privations amounting, at times, to the verge of starvation, what glowing visions fill the mind of the toiling adventurer! Richer in anticipation than the richest of his fellow-beings, he builds golden palaces, and scatters them over the world with a princely hand. He may not be a man

of imagination; but in the secret depths of his soul there is a latent hope that some day or other he will strike a "lead," and who knows but it may be a solid mountain of gold, spangled with diamonds?

The road from Placerville to Strawberry Flat is for the most part graded, and no doubt is a very good road in summer; but it would be a violation of conscience to recommend it in the month of April. The melting of the accumulated snows of the past winter had partially washed it away, and what remained was deeply furrowed by the innumerable streams that sought an outlet in the ravines. In many places it seemed absolutely impracticable for wheeled vehicles; but it is an article of faith with California teamsters that wherever a horse can go a wagon can follow. There were some exceptions to this rule, however, for the road was literally lined with broken-down stages, wagons, and carts, presenting every variety of aspect, from the general smash-up to the ordinary capsize. Wheels had taken rectangular cuts to the bottom; broken tongues projected from the mud; loads of dry-goods and whisky-barrels lay wallowing in the general wreck of matter; stout



CARAMBO!—CARAJA!—SACRAMENTO!—SANTA MARIA!—DIABOLO!

beams cut from the roadside were scattered here and there, having served in vain efforts to extricate the wagons from the oozy mire. Occasionally these patches of bad road extended for miles, and here the scenes were stirring in the highest degree. Whole trains of pack-mules struggled frantically to make the transit from one dry point to another; "burros," heavily laden, were frequently buried up to the neck, and had to be hauled out by main force. Now and then an enterprising mule would emerge from the mud, and, by attempting to keep the edge of the road, lose his foothold, and go rolling to the bottom of the cañon, pack and all. Amidst the confusion worse confounded the cries and maledictions of the *vaqueros* were perfectly overwhelming; but when the mules stuck fast in the mud, and it became necessary to unpack them, then it was that the *vaqueros* shone out most luminously. They shouted, swore, beat the mules, kicked them, pulled them, pushed them, swore again; and when all these resources failed, tore their hair and resorted to prayer and meditation. Above is a faint attempt at the *vaquero* sliding-scale.

It will doubtless be a consolation to some of these unhappy *vaqueros* to know that such of their mules as they failed to extricate from the mud during the winter, may, during the approaching summer, find their way out through the cracks. Should any future traveler be overtaken by thirst, and see a pair of ears growing out of the road, he will be safe in digging there, for underneath stands a mule, and on the back of that mule is a barrel of whisky.

Owing to repeated stoppages on the way, night overtook us at a place called "Dirty Mike's." Here we found a ruinously dilapidated frame shanty, the bar, of course, being the main feature. Next to the bar was the public bedroom, in which there was every ac-

commodation except beds, bedding, chairs, tables, and wash-stands; that is to say, there was a piece of looking-glass nailed against the window-frame, and the general comb and tooth-brush hanging by strings from a neighboring post.

A very good supper of pork and beans, fried potatoes, and coffee, was served up for us on very dirty plates, by Mike's cook; and after doing it ample justice, we turned in on our blankets and slept soundly till morning. It was much in favor of our landlord that he charged us only double the customary price. I would cheerfully give him a recommendation if he would only wash his face and his plates once or twice a week.

The ascent of the mountains is gradual and continuous the entire distance to Strawberry. After the first day's journey there is but little variety in the scenery. On the right, a fork of the American River plunges down through a winding cañon, its force and volume augmented



WHISKY BELOW.



BOARD AND LODGING.

at short intervals by numerous smaller streams that cross the road, and by others from the opposite side. Thick forests of pine loom up on each side, their tops obscuring the sky. A few patches of snow lay along our route on the first day, but on the second snow was visible on both sides of the cañon.

The succession of scenes along the road afforded us constant entertainment. In every gulch and ravine a tavern was in process of erection. Scarcely a foot of ground upon which man or beast could find a foothold was exempt from a claim. There were even bars with liquors, offering a tempting place of refreshment to the weary traveler where no vestige of a house was yet perceptible. Board and lodging signs over tents not more than ten feet square were as common as blackberries in June; and on no part of the road was there the least chance of suffering from the want of whisky, dry-goods, or cigars.

An almost continuous string of Washoeites stretched "like a great snake dragging its slow length along" as far as the eye could reach. In the course of this day's tramp we passed parties

of every description and color: Irishmen, wheeling their blankets, provisions, and mining implements on wheelbarrows; American, French, and German foot-passengers, leading heavily-laden horses, or carrying their packs on their backs, and their picks and shovels slung across their shoulders; Mexicans, driving long trains of pack-mules, and swearing fearfully, as usual, to keep them in order; dapper-looking gentlemen, apparently from San Francisco, mounted on fancy horses; women, in men's clothes, mounted on mules or "burros;" Pike County specimens, seated on piles of furniture and goods in great, lumbering wagons; whisky-peddlers, with their bar-fixtures and whisky on mule-back, stopping now and then to quench the thirst of the toiling multitude; organ-grinders, carrying their organs; drovers, riding, raving, and tearing away frantically through the brush after droves of self-willed cattle designed for the shambles; in short, every imaginable class, and every possible species of industry, was represented in this moving pageant. It was a striking and impressive spectacle to see, in full competition with

youth and strength, the most pitiable specimens of age and decay—white-haired old men, gasping for breath as they dragged their palsied limbs after them in the exciting race of avarice; cripples and hunchbacks; even sick men from their beds—all stark mad for silver.

But the tide was not setting entirely in the direction of Carson Valley. A counter-current opposed our progress, in the shape of saddle-trains without riders, long lines of pack-mules laden with silver ore, scattering parties of weather-beaten and foot-sore pedestrians, bearing their hard experience in their faces, and solitary stragglers, of all ages and degrees, mounted on skeleton horses, or toiling wearily homeward on foot—some merry, some sad, some eagerly intent on further speculation; but all bearing the unmistakable impress of Washoe.

Among the latter, a lank, leathery-looking fellow, doubtless from the land of wooden nutmegs, was shambling along through the mud, talking to himself apparently for want of more congenial fellowship. I was about to pass him, when he arrested my attention:

"Look here, stranger!"

I looked.

"You're bound for Washoe, I reckon?"

I was bound for Washoe.

"What line of business be you goin' into there?"

Was not quite certain, but thought it would be the Agency line.

"Ho! the Agency line—stage agent may be? Burche's line, I guess?"

That was not it exactly; but no matter. Perhaps I could do something for him in Washoe.

"Nothing, stranger, except to keep dark. Do you know the price of grindstones in Placerville?"

I didn't know the price of grindstones in Placerville, but supposed they might be cheap, as there were plenty there.

"That's my hand exactly!" said my friend, with an inward chuckle of satisfaction.

I expressed some curiosity to know in what respect the matter of grindstones suited his hand so well; when looking cautiously around, he drew near, and informed me confidentially that he had struck a "good thing" in Washoe. He had only been there a month, and had made a considerable pile. There was a dreadful scarcity of grindstones there, and, seeing that miners, carpenters, and mechanics of all sorts were hard up for something to sharpen their tools on, he had secured the only grindstone that could be had, which was pretty well used up when he got it. But he rigged it up ship-shape and Bristol-fashion, and set up a grinding business, which brought him in from twenty to thirty dollars a day, till nothing was left of the stone. Now he was bound to Placerville in search of a good one, with which he intended to return immediately. I wished him luck and proceeded on my way, wondering what would turn up next.

It was not long before I was stopped by another enterprising personage; but this was altogether a different style of man. There was something brisk and spruce in his appearance, in spite of a shirt far gone in rags and a shock of hair that had long been a stranger to the scissors. What region of country he came from it was impossible to say. I think he was



GRINDSTONES.

a cosmopolite, and belonged to the world generally.

"Say, Colonel!"—this was his style of address—"on the way to Washoe?"

"Yes."

"Excuse me: I have a little list of claims here, Colonel, which I would like to show you;" and he pulled from his shirt-pocket a greasy package of papers, which he dexterously unfolded. "Guess you're from San Francisco Colonel? Here is—let me see—

200 feet in the Pine Nut,
300 feet in the Grizzly Ledge,
150 feet in the Gonge Eye,
125 feet in the Wild-Cat,
100 feet in the Root-Hog-or-Die
50 feet in the Bobtail Horse,
25 feet in the Hell Roaring;

and many others, Colonel, in the best leads. Now the fact is, d'ye see, I'm a little hard up, and want to make a raise. I'll sell all, or a part, at a considerable sacrifice for a small amount of ready cash."

"How much do you want?"

"Why, if I could raise twenty dollars or so it would answer my present purpose; I'll sell you twenty feet in any of these claims for that amount. Every foot of them is worth a thou-



A SPECULATOR.

sand dollars; but d'y'e see, they're not yet developed."

Circumstances forced me to decline this offer, much to the disgust of the enterprising speculator in claims, who assured me I might go farther and fare worse; but somehow the names did not strike me as attractive in a mineral point of view.

I had by this time lost the run of all my comrades, and was obliged to pursue my journey alone. Three had gone ahead, and the other was nearly used up. The day had opened fairly, but now there were indications of bad weather. It was quite dark when I reached a small shanty about four miles from Strawberry. Here I halted till my remaining comrade came up. The proprietor of the shanty was going into the tavern business, and was engaged in building a large clap-board house. His men were all at supper, and in reply to our application for lodgings, he told us we might sleep in the calf-pen if we liked, but there was no room in the house. He could give us something to eat after his workmen were done supper, but not before. He had brandy and gin, but no tea to spare. On the whole, he thought we had better go on to Strawberry.

Now this was encouraging. It was already pattering down rain, and the calf-pen to which he directed us was knee-deep in mud and manure, without roof or shelter of any kind. Even the unfortunate progeny of the old cow, which ran bellowing around the fence, in motherly solicitude for her offspring, shivered with cold, and made piteous appeals to this hard-hearted man. I finally bribed him by means of a gold dollar to let us have a small piece of bread and a few swallows of tea. Thus refreshed, we resumed our journey.

Four miles more of slush and snow; up hill nearly all the way, across rickety bridges, over roaring cataracts, slippery rocks, stumps, and brush, through acres of black oozy mire; and so dark a bat could scarcely recognize his own father!

It was a walk to be remembered. The man in the shanty, if he possess a spark of humanity, will, I trust, feel bitterly mortified when he reads this article. He caused me some gloomy reflections upon human nature, which have been a constant source of repentance ever since. But consider the provocation. The rain poured down heavily, mingled with a cutting sleet; a doleful wind came moaning through the pines; our blankets were wet through, and not a stitch upon our backs left dry; even my spare shirt was soaking the strength out of the plug of tobacco so carefully stowed away in its folds, and my paints were giving it what aid they could in the way of color.

Well, there is an end to all misery upon earth, and so there was to this day's walk. A light at length glimmered through the pines, first faint and flickering, then a full blaze, then half a dozen brilliant lights, which proved to be camp fires under the trees, and soon we stood in front of a large and substantial log-house. This was the famous "Strawberry," known throughout the length and breadth of the land as the best stopping-place on the route to Washoe, and the last station before crossing the summit of the Sierra Nevada. The winter road for wheel-

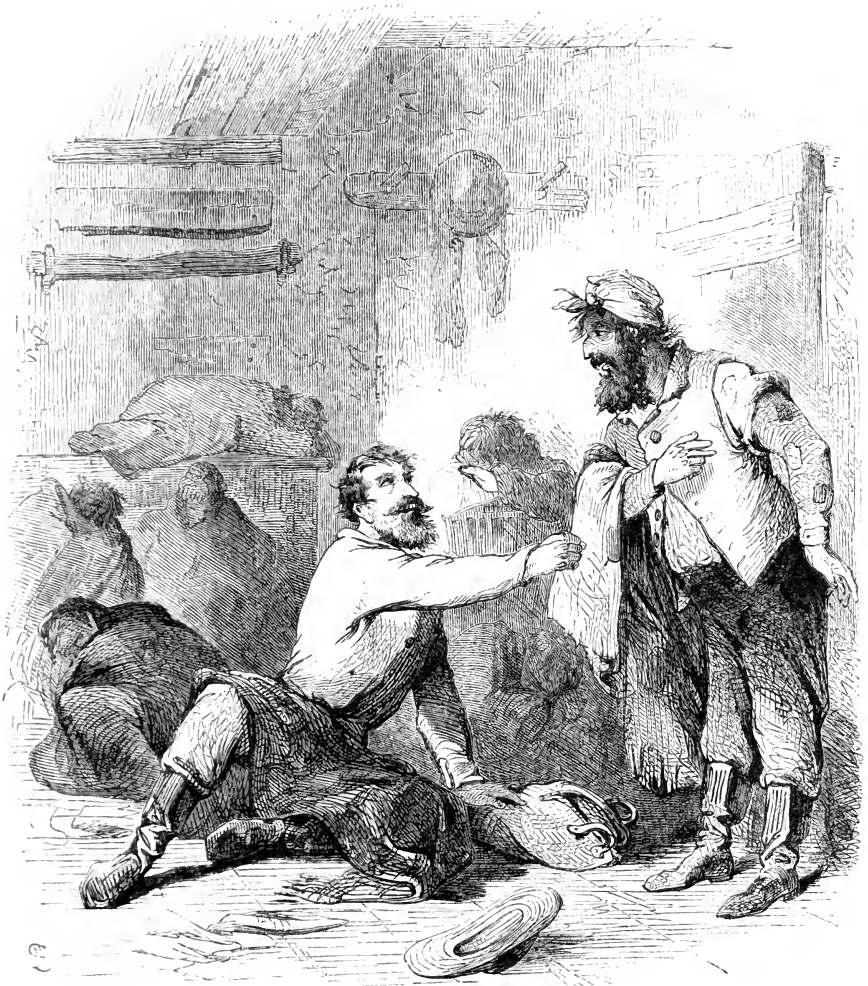
vehicles here ended; and indeed it may be said to have ended some distance below, for the last twelve miles of the road seemed utterly impracticable for wagons. At least, most of those I saw were fast in the mud, and likely to remain there till the beginning of summer. Dark and rainy as it was, there were crowds scattered around the house, as if they had some secret and positive enjoyment in the contemplation of the weather. Edging our way through, we found the bar-room packed as closely as it could be without bursting out some of the walls; and of all the motley gangs that ever happened together within a space of twenty feet, this certainly was the most extraordinary and the most motley. Dilapidated gentlemen with slouched hats and big boots, Jew peddlers dripping wet, red-shirted miners, teamsters, vaqueros, packers, and traders, swearing horribly at nothing; some drinking at the bar, some warming themselves before a tremendous log-fire that sent up a reek-

ing steam from the conglomerated mass of wet and muddy clothes—to say nothing of the boots and socks that lay simmering near the coals. A few bare and sore footed outcasts crouched down in the corners, trying to catch a nap, and here and there a returned Washocite, describing in graphic language, garnished with oaths, the wonders and beauties of Virginia City. But chiefly remarkable in the crowd was the regiment of light infantry, pressed in double file against the dining-room door, awaiting the fourth or fifth charge at the table.

At the first tinkle of the bell the door was burst open with a tremendous crash, and for a moment no battle-scene in Waterloo, no charge at Resaca de la Palma or the heights of Chapultepec, no Crimean avalanche of troops dealing death and destruction around them, could have equaled the terrific onslaught of the gallant troops of Strawberry. The whole house actually tottered and trembled at the concussion, as



DINNER AT STRAWBERRY.



THE "LAY OUT."

if shaken by an earthquake. Long before the main body had assaulted the table the din of arms was heard above the general uproar; the deafening clatter of plates, knives, and forks, and the dreadful battle-cry of "Waiter! Waiter! Pork and beans! Coffee, waiter! Beef-steak! Sausages! Potatoes! Ham and eggs—quick, waiter, for God's sake!" It was a scene of destruction and carnage long to be remembered. I had never before witnessed a battle, but I now understood how men could become maddened by the smell of blood. When the table was vacated it presented a shocking scene of desolation. Whole dishes were swept of their contents; coffee-pots were discharged to the dregs; knives, forks, plates, and spoons lay in a confused mass among the bones and mutilated remnants of the dead; chunks of bread and hot biscuit were scattered broadcast, and mince-pies were gored into fragments; tea-cups and saucers

were capsized; and the waiters, hot, red, and steamy, were panting and swearing after their superhuman labors.

Half an hour more and the battle-field was again cleared for action. This was the sixth assault committed during the evening; but it was none the less terrible on that account. Inspired by hunger, I joined the army of invaders this time, and by gigantic efforts of strength maintained an honorable position in the ranks. As the bell sounded—we broke! I fixed my eye on a chair, rushed through the struggling mass, threw out my hands frantically to seize it; but alas! it was already captured. A dark-visaged man, who looked as if he carried concealed weapons on his person, was seated in it, shouting hoarsely the battle-cry of "Pork and beans! Waiter! Coffee, waiter!" Up and down the table it was one gulping mass, jaws distended, arms stretched out, knives, forks, and even the

bare hands plunged into the enemy. Not a spot was vacant. I venture to assert that from the commencement of the assault till the capture and complete investment of the fortifications did not exceed five seconds. The storming of the Malakoff and the fall of Sebastopol could no longer claim a place in history.

At length fortune favored the brave. I got a seat at the next onslaught, and took ample satisfaction for the delay by devouring such a meal as none but a hardy Washoeite could be expected to digest. Pork and beans, cabbage, beef-steak, sausages, pies, tarts, coffee and tea, eggs, etc.—these were only a few of the luxuries furnished by the enterprising proprietor of the "Strawberry." May every blessing attend that great benefactor of mankind! I say it in all sincerity, he is a great and good man, a Websterian inn-keeper, for he thoroughly understands the constitution. I would give honorable mention to his name if I knew it: but it matters not; his house so far surpasses the Metropolitan or the St. Nicholas that there is no comparison in the relish with which the food is devoured. In respect to sleeping accommodations there may be some difference in their favor. I was too late to secure a bed in the general bedroom up stairs, where two hundred and fifty tired wayfarers were already snoring in double-shotted bunks, 2×6; but the landlord was a man of inexhaustible resources. A private whisper in his ear made him a friend forever. He nodded sagaciously and led me into a small parlor, about 15×20, in which he gave my company of five what he called a "lay-out," that is to say, a lay-out on the floor with our own blankets for beds and covering. This was a special favor, and I would have cherished it in my memory for years had not a suspicion been aroused in my mind before the lapse of half an hour that there were others in the confidence of mine host. Scarcely had I entered upon the first nap when somebody undertook to walk upon me, commencing on my head and ending on the pit of my stomach. I grasped him firmly by the leg. He apologized at once in the most abject manner; and well for him he did, for it was enough to incense any man to be suddenly roused up in that manner. The intruder, I discovered, was a Jew peddler. He offered me a cigar, which I smoked in token of amity; and in the mean time he turned in alongside and smoked another. When daylight broke I cast around me to see what every body was doing to create such a general commotion. I perceived that there were about forty sleepers, all getting up. Boots, strongly scented with feet and stockings of every possible degree of odor, were lying loose in all directions; blankets, packs, old clothes, and ragged shirts, and I don't know what all—a palpable violation of the landlord's

implied compact. True, he had not agreed to furnish a single bed for five, but he never hinted that he was going to put forty men, of all sorts and sizes, in the same general "lay-out," as he was pleased to style it, and that only large enough for half the number. Once, in Minnesota, I slept in a bed with eight, and gave considerable offense to my landlord when I remonstrated against his putting in a ninth. He said he liked to see a man "accommodating"—a reflection upon my good-nature which I considered wholly unwarranted by the circumstances. But this was even a stronger case.

The Jew-peddler had not undressed, and, not to judge him harshly, I don't think he ever did undress. He was soon up, and left, as I suppose, while I was dressing. With him departed my stockings. They were not very fine—perhaps, considering the muddy road, not very clean; but they were all I had, and were valuable beyond gold or silver in this foot-weary land. I never saw them more. What aggravated the offense, when I came to review it seriously, was, that I remembered having seen him draw just such a pair over his boots, as a protection against the snow, without the remotest suspicion of the great wrong he was doing me.

We shall meet this Stocking-Thief again.



THE STOCKING-THIEF.

THE OPERA CLOAK represented on the preceding page is one of the prime favorites of the season. The elegance of the sleeves in particular excites special admiration. The garment is composed of white merino, lined with pink taffeta, and ornamented with tassels and fringe in colors to match. A style of garment very similar to this, adapted for the street, is made of black velvet. One of this description, with a crochet-headed fringe and black silk lining, has been much admired.

FURS.—The leading authority upon this important article of winter costume reports that there will be, this season, only slight modifications upon former styles; the chief variations being that full capes and victorines are somewhat deeper, and the number of tails are increased to eight or ten.—The Russian Sable, of course, still retains its aristocratic position over the more common and less expensive materials. Next in order of precedency comes the Hudson Bay Sable; while Mink, Stone-Martin, and Fitch follow in order of rank. From these varied materials our friends will find no difficulty in graduating their purchases in such a manner as to meet their special tastes and the exigencies of their *porte-monnaies*. We may add, by way of hint, that the *Victorine* may be safely chosen by those who, for any reason, do not choose to adopt the more ample, and therefore more expensive styles—the *Full Cape* or the *Half Cape*. Our illustrations present all that need be specified respecting these various forms.—As to *Muffs*, there is no change of exterior form; but according to the latest *mode* the lining is arranged in such a manner that it is closed in the middle, forming separate compartments for the hands, so that the one which is in the muff is not liable to be chilled on the withdrawal of the other.

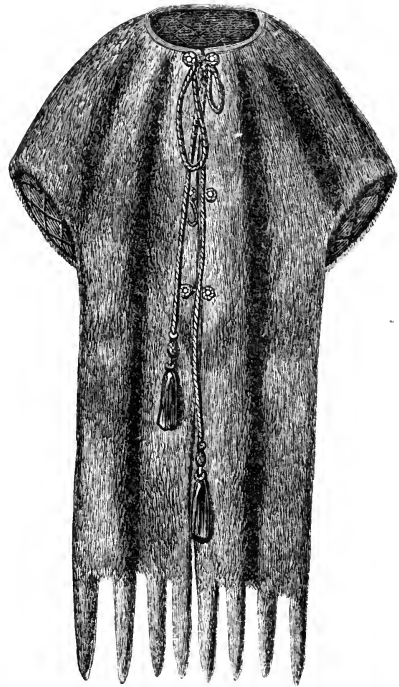


FIGURE 2.—HALF CAPE.

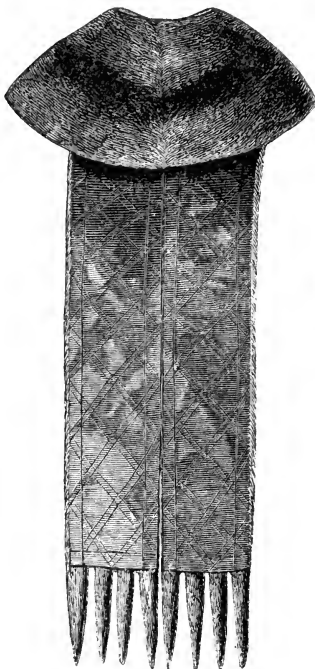


FIGURE 3.—VICTORINE.

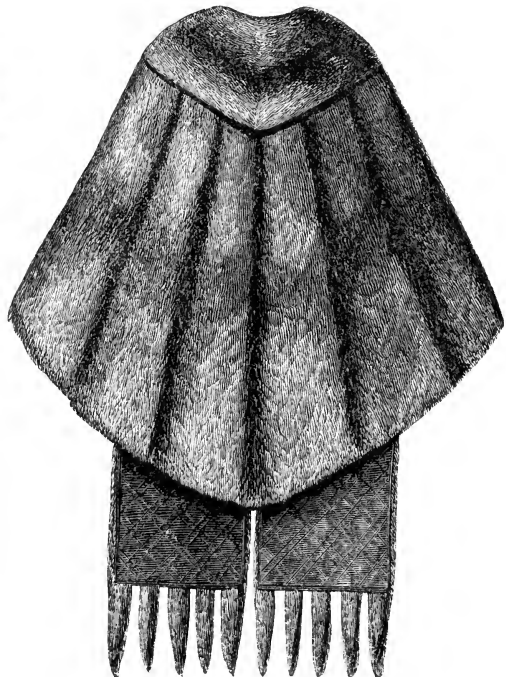


FIGURE 4.—FULL CAPE.

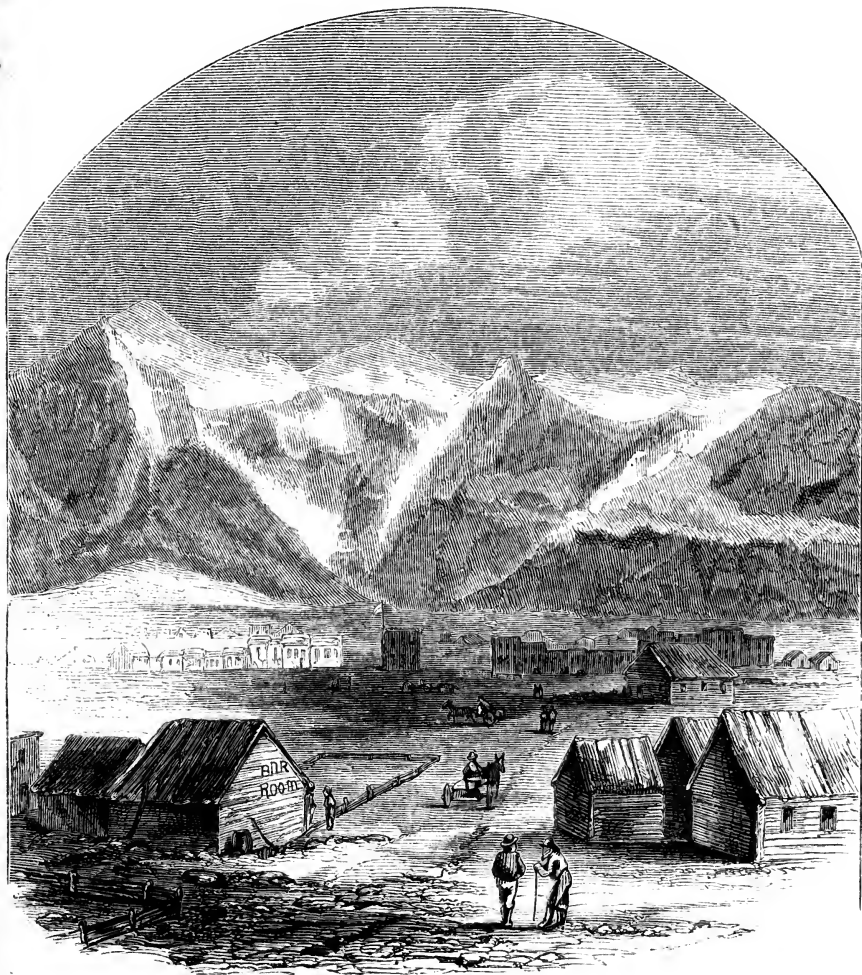
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No. CXXVIII.—JANUARY, 1861.—VOL. XXII.

A PEEP AT WASHOE.

BY J. ROSS BROWNE.

[Second Paper.]

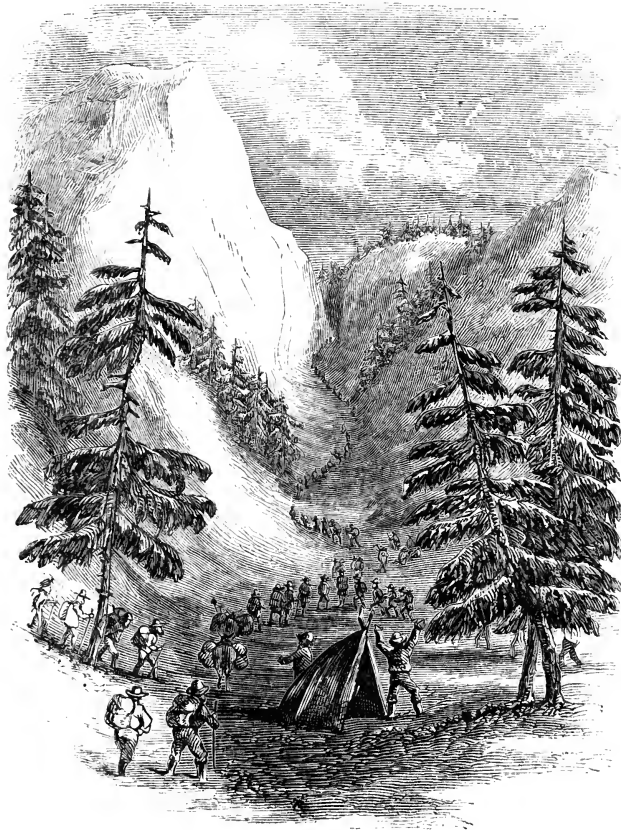


CARSON CITY.

UPON taking an observation from the front door at Strawberry, we were rather startled to find that the whole place was covered with snow to the depth of two or three feet. The pack trains had given up all hope of getting over the mountain. It was snowing hard, and the appearance of the weather was dark and threatening. To be housed up here with three or

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THE TRAIL FROM STRAWBERRY.

four hundred men, and the additional numbers that might be expected before night, was not a pleasant prospect; but to be caught in a snow-storm on the summit, where so many had perished during the past winter, was worse still. Upon reviewing the chances I resolved to start, and if the storm continued I thought there would be no difficulty in finding the way back. It was eight miles of a continuous and precipitous ascent to the summit, and three miles from that point to the Lake House in Lake Valley, where the accommodations were said to be the worst on the whole trail.

A few miles from Strawberry one of the party gave out in consequence of sore feet; the other two pushed on, despite the storm which now raged fearfully, but had not proceeded far when they were forced to turn back. I was loth to leave my disabled friend, and returned with him to Strawberry, where we had a repetition of nearly all that has already been described, only a little intensified in consequence of increased numbers. The others of our party stopped somewhere on the road, and I did not meet them again until next afternoon at Woodford's, on the other side of the mountain.

As soon as it was light next morning I took

another observation of the weather. It was still snowing, but not so heavily as on the preceding day. My remaining partner was by this time completely crippled in his feet, and had to hire a horse at the rate of twenty dollars for twenty-five miles.

I was delayed some hours in getting off, owing to the pressure of the forces at the breakfast-table; but finally made a fair start for the summit. My pack had become a source of considerable inconvenience. I was accustomed to walking, but not to carrying a burden of twenty or twenty-five pounds. My shoulders and ankles were so galled that every step had to be made on the nicest calculation; but the new snow on top of the old trail began to melt as soon as the sun came out, making a very bad trail for pedestrians. Two miles from Strawberry we crossed a bridge, and struck for the summit.

Here we had need of all our powers of endurance. It was a constant struggle through melted snow and mud—slipping, sliding, grasping, rolling, tumbling, and climbing, up again and still up, till it verily seemed as if we must be approaching the clouds. The most prominent peculiarity of these mountains is, that a person on foot, with a heavy load on his back, is never at the top when he imagines he is; the "divide" is always a little farther on, and a little higher up—at least until he passes it, which he does, entirely ignorant of the fact. There is really no perceptible "divide;" you pass a series of elevations, and commence the descent without any apparent difference in the trail.

The pack trains had broken through the old snow in many places, leaving deep holes, which, being now partially covered with recent snow, proved to be regular man-traps—often bringing up the unwary pedestrian "all standing." The sudden wrenching of the feet in the smaller holes, which had been explored by the legs of horses, mules, and cattle, was an occurrence of every ten or a dozen steps. In many places the trail was perfectly honey-combed with holes, where the heavily-laden animals had cut through the snow; and it was exceedingly difficult to find a foothold. To step on either side and avoid these bad places would seem easy enough, but I tried it on more than one occasion and got very

nearly buried alive. All along the route, at intervals of a mile or two, we continued to meet pack trains; and as every body had to give way before them, the tumbling out and plunging in the snow were very lively.

I walked on rapidly in the hope of making Woodford's—the station on the eastern slope of the mountain—before night, and by degrees got ahead of the main body of footmen, who had left Strawberry that morning. In a narrow gorge, a short distance from the commencement of the descent into Lake Valley, I happened to look up a little to the right, where, to my astonishment, I perceived four large brown wolves sitting on their haunches not over twenty feet from me! They seemed entirely unconcerned at my presence, except in so far as they may have indulged in some speculation as to the amount of flesh contained on my body. As I was entirely unarmed, I thought it would be but common politeness to speak to them, so I gave them a yell in the Indian language. At this they retired a short distance, but presently came back again as if to inquire the exact meaning of my salutation. I now thought it best not to be too intimate, for I saw that they were getting rather familiar on a short acquaintance; and picking up a stick of wood, I made a rush and a yell at them which must have been formidable in the extreme. This time they retreated more rapidly, and seemed undecided about returning. At this crisis in affairs a pack train came along, the driver of which had a pistol. Upon pointing out the wolves to him he fired, but missed them. They then retreated up the side of the mountain, and I saw nothing more of them.

The descent of the "grade" was the next rough feature in our day's journey. From the point overlooking Lake Valley the view is exceedingly fine. Lake Bigler—a sheet of water forty or fifty miles in length by ten or fifteen wide—lies embosomed in the mountains in full view from this elevation; but there was a drizzling sleet which obscured it on this occasion. I had a fine sight of it on my return, however, and

have seldom witnessed any scene in Europe or elsewhere to compare with it in extent and grandeur.

The trail on the grade was slippery with sleet, and walking upon it was out of the question. Running, jumping, and sliding were the only modes of locomotion at all practicable. I tried one of the short cuts, and found it an expeditious way of getting to the bottom. Some trifling obstruction deprived me of the use of my feet at the very start, after which I traveled down in a series of gyrations at once picturesque and complicated. When I reached the bottom I was entirely unable to comprehend how it had all happened; but there I was, pack and baggage, all safely delivered in the snow—bones sound, and free of expense.

At the Lake House—a tolerably good-sized shanty at the foot of the grade—we found a large party assembled, taking their ease as they best could in such a place, without much to eat and but little to drink, except old-fashioned tarantula-juice, "warranted to kill at forty paces."

The host of the Lake was in a constant state of nervous excitement, and did more scolding, swearing, gouging, and general hotel work, in the brief space of half an hour, than any man I





A SHORT CUT.

ever saw. He seemed to be quite worn-out with his run of customers—from a hundred to three hundred a night, and nowhere to stow 'em—all cussin' at him for not keepin' provisions: and how could he, when they ate him clean out every day, and some of 'em never paid him, and never will?

I was not sorry to get clear of the Lake House, its filth, and its troubles.

Upon crossing the valley, which is here about a mile wide, the ascent of the next summit commences. Here we had almost a repetition of the main summit, except that the descent on the other side is more gradual.

At length we struck the beginning of Hope Valley. I shall always remember this portion of the journey as the worst I ever traveled on foot. Every yard of the trail was honey-combed to the depth of two or three feet. On the edges there was no foothold at all; and occasionally we had to wade knee-deep in black, sticky mire, from which it was difficult to extricate one's feet and boots at the same time. I was glad enough when myself and two casual acquaintances succeeded

in reaching the solitary log-house which stands near the middle of the valley.

I little expected to find in this wilderness a philosopher of the old school; but here was a man who had evidently made up his mind to withstand all the allurements of wealth, and devote the remainder of his life to ascetic reflections upon the follies of mankind. Diogenes in his tub was not more rigorous in his seclusion than this isolated inhabitant of Hope Valley. His log-cabin, to be sure, was some improvement, in extent, upon the domicile of that famous philosopher; but in point of architectural style, I don't know that there could have been much advantage either way.

A few empty bags, and a bar entirely destitute of bottles, with a rough bench to sit upon, comprised all the furniture that was visible to the naked eye. From a beam overhead hung a bunch of fox-skins, which emitted a very gamy odor; and the clay floor had apparently never been swept, save by the storms that had passed over it before the cabin was built. A couple of rifles hung upon pegs projecting from the chimney, and a powder-flask was the only mantle-piece ornament. Diogenes sat, or rather reclined, on the pile of empty sacks, holding by



DIOGENES.

the neck a fierce bull-dog. The sanguinary propensities of this animal were manifested by repeated attempts to break away, and seize somebody by the throat or the leg: not that he growled, or snarled, or showed any puppyish symptoms of a trifling kind; but there was a playful switching of his tail and a leer of the eye uncommonly vicious and tiger-like. It certainly would not have taken him more than two minutes to hamstring the stoutest man in the party.

Between the dog and his master there was a very striking congeniality of disposition, if one might judge by the expression of their respective countenances. It would apparently have taken but little provocation to make either of them bite.

Battered and bruised as we were, and hungry into the bargain, after our hard struggle over the mountain, it became a matter of vital importance that we should secure lodgings for the night, and, if possible, get something to eat. The place looked rather unpromising; but after our experience in Lake Valley we were not easily discouraged. Upon broaching the subject to Diogenes, in the mildest possible manner, his brow darkened, as if a positive insult to his common sense had been attempted.

"Stay here all night!" he repeated, savagely. "What the h—ll do you want to stay here all night for?"

We hinted at a disposition to sleep, and thought he might possibly have room on the floor for our blankets.

At this he snapped his fingers contemptuously, and muttered, "Can't come that over me! I've been here too long for that!"

"But we are willing to pay you whatever is fair."

"Pay? Who said I wanted pay? Do I look like a man that wants money?"

We thought not.

"If I wanted money," continued Diogenes, "I could have made fifty dollars a day for the last two months. But I ask no favors of the world. Some of 'em wants to stay here whether I will or no; I rather think I'm too many for any of that sort—eh, Bull?—what d'ye say?" Bull growled, with a blood-thirsty meaning. "Too many altogether, gents—me and Bull."

There was a sturdy independence about this fellow, and a scorn for filthy lucre that rather astonished me as a citizen of a money-loving State.

"Well, if you can't let us stay all night, perhaps you can get us up a snack of dinner?"

"Snack of dinner?"—and here there was a guttural chuckle that boded failure again—"I tell you this ain't a tavern; and, if it was, my cook's gone out to take a airing."

"But have you nothing in the house to eat?"

"Oh yes, there's a bunch of fox-skins. If you'd like some of 'em cooked, I'll bile 'em for you."

This man's disposition had evidently been soured in early life. I think he must have been

crossed in love. His style had the merit of being terse, but his manner was sarcastic to the verge of impoliteness.

"Well, I suppose we can warm ourselves at the fire?"

"If you can," quoth Diogenes, "you can do more than I can;" and here he hauled his blanket over his shoulders, and fell back on the empty potato-sacks as if there was no more to be said on that or any other subject.

The bull-dog seemed to be of the same way of thinking, and quietly laid down by his master; still, however, keeping his eye on us, as suspicious characters.

Nothing remained but to push on for Woodford's, distant six miles.

Now, when you come to put six miles on the end of a day's journey such as ours had been, it becomes a serious matter. Besides, it was growing late, and a terrific wind, accompanied by a blinding sleet, rendered it scarcely practicable to stand up, much less to walk. I do not know how we ever staggered over that six miles. The last three, however, were downhill, and not so bad, as the snow was pretty well gone from the cañon on the approach to Woodford's.

This is the last station on the way over from Carson, and forms the upper terminus of that valley. It is supposed to be in Utah, but our landlord could not tell us exactly where the boundary line ran.

We found here several hundred people, bound in both directions, and passed a very rough night, trying to get a little sleep amidst the motley and noisy crowd.

I had endured the journey thus far very well, and had gained considerably in strength and appetite. The next day, however, upon striking into the sand of Carson Valley, my feet became terribly blistered, and the walking was exceedingly painful. There are some good farms in the upper part of the valley, between Woodford's and Genoa, though the general aspect of the country is barren in the extreme.

By sundown I had made only fifteen miles, and still was three miles from Genoa. Every hundred yards was now equal to a mile. At length I found it utterly impossible to move another step. It was quite dark, and there was nothing for it but to sit down on the road-side. Fortunately, the weather was comparatively mild. As I was meditating how to pass the night, I perceived a hot spring close by, toward which I crept; and finding the water strongly impregnated with salt, it occurred to me that it might benefit my feet. I soon plunged them in, and in half an hour found them so much improved that I was enabled to resume my journey. An hour more and I was snugly housed at Genoa.

This was a place of some importance during the time of the Mormon settlements, but had not kept pace with Carson City in the general improvement caused by the recent discoveries. At present it contained a population of not more than two or three hundred, chiefly store-keepers,

teamsters, and workmen employed upon a neighboring saw-mill. The inhabitants professed to be rich in silver leads, but upon an examination of the records to find the lead in which my San Francisco friend had invested, and which was represented to be in this district, I was unable to find any trace of it; and there was no such name as that of the alleged owner known or ever heard of in Genoa. In fact, as I afterward ascertained, it was purely a fictitious name, and the whole transaction was one of those Peter Funk swindles so often practiced upon the unwary during this memorable era of swindles. I don't know how my friend received the intelligence, but I reported it to him without a solitary mitigating circumstance. Had I met with the vile miscreant who had imposed upon him, I should have felt bound to resort to personal measures of satisfaction, in consideration of the fund expended by my friend on the expenses of this Commission of Inquiry. The deeds were so admirably drawn, and the names written so legibly, that I don't wonder he was taken in. In fact, the only obstacle to his scheme of sudden wealth was, that there were no such mines, and no such men as the alleged discoverers, in existence.

I proceeded the next day to Carson City, which I had fixed upon as the future headquarters of my agency. The distance from Genoa is fifteen miles, the road winding around the base of the foot-hills most of the way. I was much impressed with the marked difference between the country on this side of the Sierra Nevada range and the California side. Here the mountains were but sparsely timbered; the soil was poor and sandy, producing little else than stunted sage bushes; and the few scattering farms had a thriftless and poverty-stricken look, as if the task of cultivation had proved entirely hopeless, and had long since been given up. Across the valley toward the Desert, ranges of mountains, almost destitute of trees, and of most stern and forbidding aspect, stretched as far as the eye could reach. Carson River, which courses through the plain, presented the only pleasing feature in the scene.

I was rather agreeably surprised at the civilized aspect of Carson City. It is really quite a pretty and thrifty little town. Situated within a mile of the foot-hills, within reach of the main timber region of the country, and well watered by streams from the mountains, it is rather imposing on first acquaintance; but the climate is abominable, and not to be endured. I know of none so bad except that of Virginia City, which is infinitely worse. The population was about twelve or fifteen hundred at the time of my visit. There was great speculation in town lots going on—a rumor having come from Salt Lake that the seat of government of Utah was about to be removed to Carson. Hotels and stores were in progress of erection all about the Plaza; but especially drinking and gambling saloons—it being an article of faith among the embryo sovereigns of Utah that no government can be judiciously

administered without plenty of whisky, and superior accommodations for "bucking at Monte." I am not sure but there is a similar feature in the California constitution; at least, the practice is carried on to some extent at Sacramento during the sittings of the Legislature. Measures of the most vital importance are first introduced in rum-cocktails, then steeped in whisky, after which they are engrossed in gin for a third reading. Before the final vote, the opponents adjourn to a game of *poker* or *sledge*, and upon the amount of Champagne furnished on the occasion by the respective parties interested in the bill depends its passage or defeat. It was said that Champagne carried one of the great Senatorial elections; but this has been denied, and it would be dangerous to insist upon it.

I had the pleasure of meeting in Carson an esteemed friend from San Francisco, Mr. A. J. Van Winkle, Real Estate Agent; who, being a descendant of the famous Rip Van Winkle, was thoughtful enough to furnish me with a bunk to sleep in. Warned by the fate of his unhappy ancestor, my friend had gone briskly into the land business, and now owned enough of town lots, of amazingly appreciative value, to keep any man awake for the remainder of his life. I think if I had as much property, doubling itself up all the time like an acrobat in a circus, I would never sleep another wink thinking about it.

Chief among the curiosities of Carson City is the *Territorial Enterprise*—a newspaper of an origin long anterior to the mining excitement. I was introduced to "the Colonel," who presides over the editorial department, and found him uncommonly strong on the ultimate destiny of Carson. His office was located in a dirty frame shanty, where, amidst types, rollers, composing-stones, and general rubbish of a dark and literary aspect, those astounding editorials which now and then arouse the public mind are concocted. The Colonel and his compositors live in a sort of family fashion, entirely free from the rigorous etiquette of such establishments in New York. They cook their own food in the composition room (which is also the editorial and press room), and being, as a general thing, short of plates, use the frying-pan in common for that purpose. In cases of great festivity and rejoicing, when a subscriber has settled up arrearages or the cash is paid down for a good job of hand-bills, the Colonel purchases the best tender-loin steak to be had in market, and cooks it with one hand, while with the other he writes a letter of thanks to the subscriber, or a puff on the hand-bill. But the great hope upon which the Colonel feeds his imagination is the removal of the seat of government from Salt Lake to Carson City, which he considers the proper place. Mr. Van Winkle is also of the same opinion; and, as a general thing, the proposition is favorably entertained by the citizens of Carson.

As usual in new countries, a strong feeling of rivalry exists between the Carsonites and the inhabitants of Virginia City. I have summed up

the arguments on both sides and reduced them to the following pungent essence :

Virginia City—a mud-hole ; climate, hurricanes and snow ; water, a dilution of arsenic, plumbago, and copperas ; wood, none at all except sage brush ; no title to property, and no property worth having.

Carson City—a mere accident ; occupation of the inhabitants, waylaying strangers bound for Virginia ; business, selling whisky, and so dull at that, men fall asleep in the middle of the street going from one groggery to another ; productions, grass and weeds on the Plaza.

While this fight is going on Silver City, which lies about midway between the two, shrugs her shoulders and thanks her stars there can be no rivalry in her case. If ever there was a spot fitted by nature for a seat of government it is Silver City—the most central, the most moral, the most promising ; in short, the only place where the seat of government can exist for any length of time.

This Kilkenny-cat fight is highly edifying to a stranger, who, of course, is expected to take sides, or at once acknowledged himself an enemy. The result, I hope, will be satisfactory and triumphant to all parties. I would suggest that the government be split into three slices, and a slice stowed away under ground in each of the great cities, so that it may permeate the foundations of society.

A few days after my arrival in Carson the sky darkened, and we soon had a specimen of the spring weather of this region. To say that it stormed, snowed, and rained would be ridiculously tame in comparison with the real state of the case. The wind whistled through the thin shanties in a manner that left scarcely a hope of roof or frame standing till night. Though the crevices came little hurricanes of snow-drift mixed with sand ; each tenement groaned and creaked as if its last hour had come ; the air was bitterly cold ; and it seemed, in short, as if the vengeance of Heaven had been let loose on this desolate and benighted region.

Next day the clouds gradually lifted from the mountain tops, and the sun once more shone out bright and clear. The snow, which now covered the valley, began to disappear ; the howling of half-starved cattle, in search of the few green patches visible here and there, gave some promise of life ; but soon the portentous gusts of wind swept down again from the cañons ; dark clouds overspread the sky, and a still more violent storm than on the preceding day set in, and continued without intermission all night. By morning the whole face of the country was covered with snow. A few stragglers came in from Woodford's, who reported that the trail to Placerville was covered up to the depth of six or eight feet, and was entirely unpracticable for man or beast. Apprehensions were felt for the safety of the trains on the way through, as nothing could be heard from them. A large party had started out to open the trail, but were forced back by the severity of the weather. The snow-drifts

were said to vary from twenty to thirty feet in depth.

Here was a pretty predicament ! To be shut up in this desolate region, where even the cattle were dying of starvation, with seven or eight thousand human mouths to be fed, and the stock of provisions rapidly giving out, was rather a serious aspect of affairs. I do not know that actual starvation could have resulted for some time, certainly not until what cattle were alive had been killed, and soup made of the dead carcasses that covered the plain. Even before resorting to the latter extremity there were horses, mules, burros, and dogs, on hand, upon which the cravings of hunger might be appeased for a month or so ; and in the event of all these resources giving out, should the worst come to the worst, the few digger Indians that hung around the settlements might be made available as an article of temporary subsistence.

In this extremity, when considerable suffering if not absolute starvation stared us in the face, the anxiety respecting the opening of the trails became general. Groups of men of divers occupations stood in the streets, or on every little rise of ground in the neighborhood, speculating upon the chances or peering through the gloom in the hope of discerning the approach of some relief train. The sugar was gone ; flour was eighty dollars a sack, and but little to be had at that ; barley was seventy-five cents a pound, and hay sixty cents ; horses were dying for want of something to eat ; cigars were rapidly giving out : whisky might stand the pull another week, but the prospect was gloomy of any thing more nourishing.

In this exciting state of affairs, when every brain was racked to devise ways and means of relief, and when hope of succor was almost at an end, a scout came running in from the direction of the Downerville trail with the glorious tidings of an approaching mule train. The taverns, billiard saloons, groggeries, and various stores were soon empty—every body rushed down the street to have assurance made doubly sure. Cheer after cheer burst from the elated crowd when the train hove in sight. On it came—at first like a row of ants creeping down the hill-side ; then nearer and larger, till the clatter of the hoofs and the rattling of the packs could be heard ; then the blowing of the tired mules ; and at last the leader, an old gray mule, came staggering wearily along heavily packed. A barrel was poised on his back—doubtless a barrel of beef, or it might be pork, or bacon. The brand heaves in sight. Per Baccho ! it is neither beef, pork, nor bacon, but *whisky*—old Bourbon whisky ! The next mule totters along under two half-barrels. Speculation is rife. Every man with a stomach and an appetite for wholesome food is interested. Pigs' feet perhaps, or mackerel, or, it may be, preserved chicken ? But here is the mark—*brandy* ; by the powers ! nothing but *brandy* ! However, here comes the third with a load of five-gallon kegs—molasses beyond question, or lard, or butter ? Wrong



THE STAGE.

again, gentlemen—*gin*, nothing but *gin*. On staggers a fourth heavily burdened with more kegs—sugar, or corn meal, or preserved apples, I'll bet my head. Never bet your head. It is nothing but bitters—*Mack's Bitters!* But surely the fifth carries a box of crushed sugar on his back, he bears himself so gayly under his burden. And well he may! That box contains no more sugar than you do, my friend; it is stuffed choke-full with decanters, tumblers, and pewter spoons. But there are still ten or fifteen mules more. Surely there must be some provisions in the train. Nobody can live to a very protracted period of life on brandy, whisky, gin, Mack's Bitters, and glass-ware. Alas, for human expectation! One by one the jaded animals pass, groaning and tottering under their heavy burdens—a barrel of rum; two boxes of bottled ale; six crates of Champagne; two pipes of California wine; a large crate of bar fixtures; and a dozen boxes of cigars—none of them nutritious articles of subsistence.

As if to enhance our troubles, the party in charge of the train had been nearly starved out in the mountains, and now came in the very lankest and hungriest of the crowd. If they were thirsty, it was their own fault; but none of them looked as if they had suffered in that respect.

Before entering into the responsible duties of my agency I was desirous of seeing as much of the mining region as possible, and with this view took the stage for Virginia City. The most remarkable peculiarity on the road was the driver, whose likeness I struck in a happy moment of inspiration. At Silver City, eight miles from Carson, I dismounted, and proceeded the rest of the way on foot. The road here becomes rough and hilly, and but little is to be seen of the city except a few tents and board shanties. Half a mile beyond is a remarkable gap cut by Nature through the mountain, as if for the express purpose of giving the road an opportunity to visit Virginia City.

As I passed through the Devil's Gate it struck

me that there was something ominous in the name. "Let all who enter here—" But I had already reached the other side. It was too late now for repentance. I was about to inquire where the devil— Excuse me, I use the word in



DEVIL'S GATE.



VIRGINIA CITY.

no indecorous sense. I was simply about to ask where he lived, when, looking up the road, I saw amidst the smoke and din of shivered rocks, where grimy imps were at work blasting for ore, a string of adventurers laden with picks, shovels, and crowbars; kegs of powder, frying-pans, pitchforks, and other instruments of torture—all wearily toiling in the same direction; decrepit old men, with avarice imprinted upon their furrowed brows; Jews and Gentiles, foot-weary and haggard; the young and the old, the strong and the weak, all alike burning with an unhallowed lust for lucre; and then I shuddered as the truth flashed upon me that they were going straight to—Virginia City.

Every foot of the cañon was claimed, and gangs of miners were at work all along the road, digging and delving into the earth like so many infatuated gophers. Many of these unfortunate creatures lived in holes dug into the side of the hill, and here and there a blanket thrown over a few stakes served as a domicile to shield them from the weather.

At Gold Hill, two miles beyond the Gate, the

excitement was quite pitiable to behold. Those who were not at work, burrowing holes into the mountain, were gathered in gangs around the whisky saloons, pouring liquid fire down their throats and swearing all the time in a manner so utterly reckless as to satisfy me they had long since bid farewell to hope.

This district is said to be exceedingly rich in gold, and I fancy it may well be so, for it is certainly rich in nothing else. A more barren-looking and forbidding spot could scarcely be found elsewhere on the face of the earth. The whole aspect of the country indicates that it must have been burned up in hot fires many years ago and reduced to a mass of cinders; or scraped up from all the desolate spots in the known world, and thrown over the Sierra Nevada Mountains in a confused mass to be out of the way. I do not wish to be understood as speaking disrespectfully of any of the works of creation; but it is inconceivable that this region should ever have been designed as an abode for man.

A short distance beyond Gold Hill we came

in sight of the great mining capital of Washoe, the far famed Virginia City. In the course of a varied existence it had been my fortune to visit the city of Jerusalem, the city of Constantinople, the city of the Sea, the City of the Dead, the Seven Cities, and others of historical celebrity in the Old World; and many famous cities in the New, including Port Townsend, Crescent City, Benicia, and the New York of the Pacific; but I had never yet beheld such a city as that which now burst upon my distended organs of vision.

On a slope of mountains speckled with snow, sage-bushes, and mounds of upturned earth, without any apparent beginning or end, congruity or regard for the eternal fitness of things, lay outspread the wondrous city of Virginia.

Frame shanties, pitched together as if by accident; tents of canvas, of blankets, of brush, of potato-sacks and old shirts, with empty whisky barrels for chimneys; smoky hovels of mud and

stone; coyote holes in the mountain-side forcibly seized and held by men; pits and shafts with smoke issuing from every crevice; piles of goods and rubbish on craggy points, in the hollows, on the rocks, in the mud, in the snow, every where, scattered broadcast in pell-mell confusion, as if the clouds had suddenly burst overhead and rained down the dregs of all the flimsy, rickety, filthy little hovels and rubbish of merchandise that had ever undergone the process of evaporation from the earth since the days of Noah. The intervals of space, which may or may not have been streets, were dotted over with human beings of such sort, variety, and numbers that the famous ant-hills of Africa were as nothing in the comparison. To say that they were rough, muddy, unkempt and unwashed, would be but faintly expressive of their actual appearance; they were all this by reason of exposure to the weather; but they seemed to have caught the very diabolical tint and grime of the whole





GOLD HILL.

place. Here and there, to be sure, a San Francisco dandy of the "boiled shirt" and "stove-pipe" pattern loomed up in proud consciousness of the triumphs of art under adverse circumstances; but they were merely peacocks in the barn-yard.

A fraction of the crowd, as we entered the precincts of the town, were engaged in a lawsuit relative to a question of title. The arguments used on both sides were empty whisky-bottles, after the fashion of the *Basilinum*, or club law, which, according to Addison, prevailed in the colleges of learned men in former times. Several of the disputants had already been knocked down and convinced, and various others were freely shedding their blood in the cause of justice. Even the bull-terriers took an active part—or, at least, a very prominent part. The difficulty was about the ownership of a lot, which had been staked out by one party and "jumped" by another. Some two or three hundred disinterested observers stood by, enjoying the spectacle, several of them with their hands on their revolvers, to be ready in case of any serious issue; but these dangerous weapons are only used on great occasions—

a refusal to drink, or some illegitimate trick at monte.

Upon fairly reaching what might be considered the centre of the town, it was interesting to observe the manners and customs of the place. Groups of keen speculators were huddled around the corners, in earnest consultation about the rise and fall of stocks; rough customers, with red and blue flannel shirts, were straggling in from the Flowery Diggings, the Desert, and other rich points, with specimens of croppings in their hands, or offering bargains in the "Rogers," the "Lady Bryant," the "Mammoth," the "Woolly Horse," and Heaven knows how many other valuable *leads*, at prices varying from ten to seventy-five dollars a foot. Small knots of the knowing ones were in confidential interchange of thought on the subject of every other man's business; here and there a loose man was caught by the button, and led aside behind a shanty to be "stuffed;" every body had some grand secret, which nobody else could find out: and the game of "dodge" and "pump" was universally played. Jew clothing-men were setting out their goods and chattels in front of wretched-looking tenements; monte-dealers, gamblers,

thieves, cut-throats, and murderers were mingling miscellaneously in the dense crowds gathered around the bars of the drinking saloons. Now and then a half-starved Pah-Ute or Washoe Indian came tottering along under a heavy press of fagots and whisky. On the main street, where the mass of the population were gathered, a jaunty fellow who had "made a good thing of it" dashed through the crowds on horseback, accoutred in genuine Mexican style, swinging his *reata* over his head, and yelling like a devil let loose. All this time the wind blew in terrific gusts from the four quarters of the compass, tearing away signs, capsizing tents, scattering the grit from the gravel-banks with blinding force in every body's eyes, and sweeping furiously around every crook and corner in search of some sinner to smite. Never was such a wind as this—so scathing, so searching, so given to penetrate the very core of suffering humanity; disdainful overcoats, and utterly scornful of shawls and blankets. It actually seemed to double up, twist, pull, push, and sew the unfortunate biped till his muscles cracked and his bones rattled—following him wherever he sought refuge, pursuing him down the back of the neck, up the coat-sleeves, through the legs of his pantaloons, into his boots—in short, it was the most villainous and persecuting wind that ever blew, and I boldly protest that it did nobody good.

Yet, in the midst of the general wreck and crash of matter, the business of trading in claims, "bucking," and "bearing" went on as if the zephyrs of Virginia were as soft and balmy as those of San Francisco.

This was surely— No matter; nothing on earth could aspire to competition with such a

place. It was essentially infernal in every aspect, whether viewed from the Comstock Ledge or the summit of Gold Hill. Nobody seemed to own the lots except by right of possession; yet there was trading in lots to an unlimited extent. Nobody had any money, yet every body was a millionaire in silver claims. Nobody had any credit, yet every body bought thousands of feet of glittering ore. Sales were made in the Mammoth, the Lady Bryant, the Sacramento, the Winnebunk, and the innumerable other "outside claims," at the most astounding figures—but not a dime passed hands. All was silver underground, and deeds and mortgages on top; silver, silver every where, but scarce a dollar in coin. The small change had somehow gotten out of the hands of the public into the gambling saloons.

Every speck of ground covered by canvas, boards, baked mud, brush, or other architectural material, was jammed to suffocation; there were sleeping houses, twenty feet by thirty, in which from one hundred and fifty to two hundred solid sleepers sought slumber at night, at a dollar a head; tents, eight by ten, offering accommodations to the multitude; any thing or any place, even a stall in a stable, would have been a luxury.

The chief hotel, called, if I remember, the "Indication," or the "Hotel de Haystack," or some such euphonious name, professed to accommodate three hundred live men, and it doubtless did so, for the floors were covered from the attic to the solid earth—three hundred human beings in a tinder-box not bigger than a first-class hen-coop! But they were sorry-looking sleepers as they came forth each morning, swearing at the evil genius who had directed them to this miserable spot—every man a dollar and a pound of flesh poorer. I saw some, who perhaps were short of means, take surreptitious naps against the posts and walls in the bar-room, while they ostensibly professed to be mere spectators.

In truth, wherever I turned there was much to confirm the forebodings with which I had entered the Devil's Gate. The deep pits on the hill-sides; the blasted and barren appearance of the whole country; the unsightly hodge-podge of a town; the horrible confusion of tongues; the roaring, raving drunkards at the bar-rooms, swilling fiery liquids from morning till night; the flaring and flaunting gambling-saloons, filled with desperadoes of the vilest sort; the ceaseless torrent of imprecations that shocked the ear on every side; the mad speculations and feverish thirst for gain—all combined to give me a forcible impression of the unhallowed character of the place.

What dreadful savage is that? I asked, as a ferocious-looking monster in human shape stalked through the crowd. Is it—can it be the— No; that's only a murderer. He shot three men a few weeks ago, and will probably shoot another before



"MY CLAIM, SIR!"

night. And this aged and decrepit man, his thin locks floating around his haggard and unshaved face, and matted with filth? That's a speculator from San Francisco. See how wildly he grasps at every "indication," as if he had a lease of life for a thousand years! And this bull-dog fellow, with a mutilated face, button-holing every by-passer? That fellow? Oh, he's only a "bummer" in search of a cocktail. And this—and this—all these crazy-looking wretches, running hither and thither with hammers and stones in their hands, calling one another aside, hurrying to the assay-offices, pulling out papers, exchanging mysterious signals—who and what are all these? Oh, these are Washoe millionaires. They are deep in "outside claims." The little fragments of rock they carry in their hands are "croppings" and "indications" from the "Wake-up-Jake," "Root-Hog-or-Die," "Wild-Cut," "Grizzly Hill," "Dry-up," "Same Horse," "Let-her-Rip," "You Bet," "Gouge-Eye," and other famous ledges and companies, in which they own some thousands of feet. Hold, good friend! I am convinced there is no rest for the wicked. All night long these dreadful noises continue; the ears are distracted with an unintelligible jargon of "croppings," "ledges," "lodes," "leads," "indications," "feet," and "strikes," and the nostrils offended with foul odors of boots, old pipes, and dirty blankets—who can doubt the locality? If the climate is more rigorous than Dante describes it—if Calypso might search in vain for Ulysses in such a motley crowd—these apparent differences are not inconsistent with the general theory of changes produced by American emigration and the sudden conglomeration of such incongruous elements.

I was grieved and astonished to find many friends here—some of them gentlemen who had borne a very fair reputation in San Francisco, and whose unhappy fate I never could have anticipated. The bankers and brokers who had been cut off, after a prosperous career on Montgomery Street, had, of course, reached the goal toward which they had long been tending; the lawyers, who had set their unfortunate fellow-creatures by the ears, were now in a congenial element; the hard traders and unscrupulous speculators, who had violated all the moral obligations of life in their greedy lust for money, naturally abounded in large numbers; in short, it was not a matter of surprise that justice had at length been dealt out to many sinful men. But when I recognized friends whom I had formerly known as good citizens, the fathers of interesting families, exemplary members of society in San Francisco, I was profoundly shocked. It was impossible to deny that they must have been guilty of some grievous wickedness to entitle them to such a punishment.



SAN FRANCISCO SPECULATORS.

What surprised me most of all was to find Colonel R——, to whom I had a letter of introduction, the leading spirit here. His assistance was sought by all. He was the best friend to any man in need of advice. Hospitality with him was a cardinal virtue. He had turned out of his own snug quarters long since to make room for the sick and disabled, and now slept about wherever he could find shelter. He was chief owner in the "Comstock Lead," and showed great liberality in giving a helping hand to others on the road to fortune. In fine, I am utterly unable to determine for what crime he was now suffering expiation. There was nothing in his conduct that I could discover the least unbecoming to a good citizen. His benevolence, hospitality, and genial manners, were worthy any Christian. To me and to many others he proved the good Samaritan, and I still hesitate to believe that he merited the hard fate now meted out to him. But who can fathom the judgments pronounced upon men?

The bare contemplation of the miseries suffered by the inhabitants of this dreadful place was enough to stagger all convictions of my identity. Could it be possible that I was at last in—in Virginia City? What had I done to bring me to this? In vain I entered into a retrospection of the various iniquities of my life; but I could hit upon nothing that seemed bad enough to warrant such a fate. At length a withering truth flashed upon me. This must be the end of a Federal existence! This must be the abode of Ex-Inspector-Generals! It must be



A FALL.

traordinary "indications" yet discovered, in which one or other of them held an interest of fifty or a hundred feet, worth, say, a thousand dollars a foot. Between the cat-naps of oblivion that visited my eyes there was a constant din of "croppings"—"feet"—"fifty thousand dollars"—"struck it rich!"—"the Comstock Ledge!"—"the Billy Choller!"—"Miller on the rise!"—"Mammoth!"—"Sacramento!"—"Lady Bryant!"—"a thousand feet more!"—"great bargain"—"forty dollars a foot!"—crash! rip! bang!—"an earthquake!"—"run for your lives!"

What the deuce is the matter?

It happened thus one night. The wind was blowing in terrific gusts. In the midst of the general clatter on the subject of croppings, bargains, and indications, down came our next neighbor's house on the top of us with a terrific crash. For a moment it was difficult to tell which house

here that the accounts current of the decapitated are examined. Woe to the wretch who failed to profit by specie clause of the Independent Treasury Act while he had official claws on hand! Such laches of public duty can not be tolerated even in—Virginia City.

I slept, or rather tried to sleep, at one "Zip's," where there were only twenty "bunks" in the room, and was fortunate in securing a bunk even there. But the great Macbeth himself, laboring under the stings of an evil conscience, could have made a better hand of sleeping than I did at Zip's. It proved to be a general meeting-place for my San Francisco friends, and as they were all very rich in mining claims, and bent on getting still richer, they were continually making out deeds, examining titles, trading and transferring claims, discussing the purchases and prospects of the day, and exhibiting the most ex-



ASSAY OFFICE.



THE COMSTOCK LEAD.

was the ruin. Amidst projecting and shivered planks, the flapping of canvas, and the howling of the wind, it really seemed as if chaos had come again. But "Zip's" was well braced, and stood the shock without much damage, a slight heel and lurch to leeward being the chief result. I could not help thinking, as I turned in again after the alarm, that there could no longer be a doubt on the subject which had already occasioned me so many unpleasant reflections. It even seemed as if I smelled something like brimstone; but upon calling to Zip to know what was the matter, he informed me that he was "only dryin' the boots on the stove."

Notwithstanding the number of physicians who had already hoisted their "shingles," there was much sickness in Virginia, owing chiefly to exposure and dissipation, but in some measure to the deleterious quality of the water. Nothing more was wanting to confirm my original impressions. The water was certainly the worst ever used by man. Filtered through the Comstock Lead, it carried with it much of the plumbago, arsenic, copperas, and other poisonous minerals alleged to exist in that vein. The citizens of Virginia had discovered what they conceived to be an infallible way of "correcting it;" that

is to say, it was their practice to mix a spoonful of water in half a tumbler of whisky, and then drink it. The whisky was supposed to neutralize the bad effects of the water. Sometimes it was considered good to mix it with gin. I was unable to see how any advantage could be gained in this way. The whisky contained strychnine, oil of tobacco, tarentula juice, and various effective poisons of the same general nature, including a dash of corrosive sublimate; and the gin was manufactured out of turpentine and whisky, with a sprinkling of Prussic acid to give it flavor. For my part, I preferred taking poison in its least complicated form, and therefore adhered to the water. With hot saleratus bread, beans fried in grease, and such drink as this, it was no wonder that scores were taken down sick from day to day.

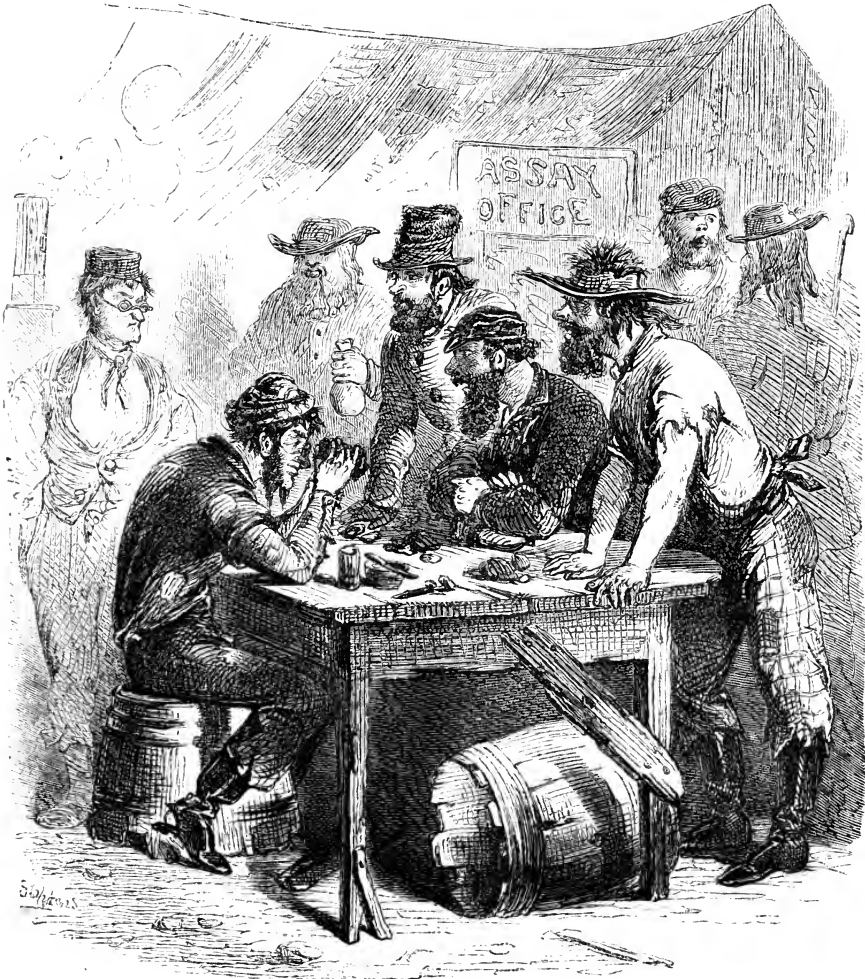
Sickness is bad enough at the best of times; but here the condition of the sick was truly pitiable. There was scarcely a tenement in the place that could be regarded as affording shelter against the piercing wind; and crowded as every tent and hovel was to its utmost capacity, it was hard even to find a vacant spot to lie down, much less sleep or rest in comfort. Many had come with barely means sufficient to defray their expenses

to the diggings, in the confident belief that they would immediately strike upon "something rich." Or, if they failed in that, they could work a while on wages. But the highest wages here for common labor were three dollars a day, while meals were a dollar each, and lodgings the same. It was a favor to get work for "grub." Under such circumstances, when a poor fellow fell sick, his recovery could only be regarded as a matter of luck. No record of the deaths was kept. The mass of the emigration were strangers to each other, and it concerned nobody in particular when a man "pegged out," except to put him in a hole somewhere out of the way.

I soon felt the bad effects of the water. Possibly I had committed an error in not mixing it with the other poisons; but it was quite poisonous enough alone to give me violent pains in the stomach and a very severe diarrhea. At the same time, I was seized with an acute attack of rheumatism in the shoulder and neuralgic pains

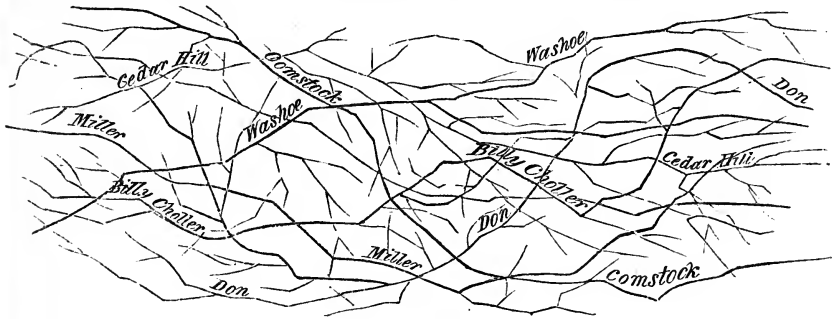
in the head. The complication of miseries which I now suffered was beyond all my calculations of the hardships of mining life. As yet I had struck nothing better than "Winn's Restaurant," where I took my meals. The Comstock Ledge was all very fine; but a THOUSAND DOLLARS A FOOT! Who ever had a thousand dollars to put in a running foot of ground, when not even the great Comstock himself could tell where it was running to. On the whole, I did not consider the prospect cheering.

At this period there were no laws of any kind in the district for the preservation of order. Some regulations had been established to secure the right of discovery to claimants; but they were loose and indefinite, differing in each district according to the caprice of the miners, and subject to no enforcement except that of the revolver. In some localities the original discoverer of a vein was entitled to 400 running feet; he could put down the names of as many friends as



he chose at 200 feet each. Notice had to be recorded at certain places of record, designating the date and location of discovery. All "leads" were taken up with their "dips, spurs, and angles." But who was to judge of the "dips, spurs, and angles?" That was the difficulty. Every man ran them to suit himself. The Comstock Ledge was in a mess of confusion. The shareholders had the most enlarged views of its "dips, spurs, and angles;" but those who struck

croppings above and below were equally liberal in their notions; so that, in fine, every body's spurs were running into every body else's angles. The Cedar Hill Company were spurring the Miller Company; the Virginia Ledge was spurring the Continuation; the Dow Company were spurring the Billy Choller, and so on. It was a free fight all round, in which the dips, spurs, and angles might be represented thus—after the pattern of a bunch of snakes:



THE CLAIMS.

The contention was very lively. Great hopes were entertained that when Judge Cradlebaugh arrived he would hold Court, and then there would be some hope of settling these conflicting claims. I must confess I did not share in the opinion that law would settle any dispute in which silver was concerned. The Almaden Mine case is not yet settled, and never will be as long as there are judges and juries to sit upon it, and lawyers to argue it, and silver to pay expenses. Already Virginia City was infested with gentlemen of the bar, thirsting and hungering for chances at the Comstock. If it could only be brought into Court, what a picking of bones there would be!

When the snow began to clear away there was no end to the discoveries alleged to be made every day. The Flowery Diggings, six miles below Virginia, were represented to be wonderfully rich—so rich, indeed, that the language of every speculator who held a claim there partook of the flowery character of the diggings. The whole country was staked off to the distance of twenty or thirty miles. Every hill-side was grubbed open, and even the Desert was pegged, like the sole of a boot, with stakes designating claims. Those who could not spare time to go out "prospecting" hired others, or furnished provisions and pack-mules, and went shares. If the prospecting party struck "any thing rich," it was expected they would share it honestly; but I always fancied they would find it more profitable to hold on to that, and find some other rich lead for the resident partners.

In Virginia City a man who had been at work digging a cellar found rich indications. He immediately laid claim to a whole street covered with houses. The excitement produced by this "streak of luck" was perfectly frantic. Hun-

dreds went to work grubbing up the ground under their own and their neighbors' tents; and it was not long before the whole city seemed in a fair way of being undermined. The famous Winn, as I was told, struck the richest lead of all directly under his restaurant, and was next day considered worth a million of dollars. The dips, spurs, and angles of these various discoveries covered every foot of ground within an area of six miles. It was utterly impossible that a fraction of the city could be left. Owners of lots protested in vain. The mining laws were paramount where there was no law at all. There was no security to personal property, or even to persons. He who turned in to sleep at night might find himself in a pit of silver by morning. At least it was thus when I made up my mind to escape from that delectable region; and now, four months later, I really don't know whether the great City of Virginia is still in existence, or whether the inhabitants have not found a "deeper deep, still threatening to devour."

It must not be supposed, from the general character of the population, that Virginia City was altogether destitute of men skilled in scientific pursuits. There were few, indeed, who did not profess to know something of geology; and as for assayers and assay offices, they were almost as numerous as bar-keepers and groggeries. A tent, a furnace, half a dozen crucibles, a bottle of acid, and a hammer, generally comprised the entire establishment; but it is worthy of remark that the assays were always satisfactory. Silver, or indications of silver, were sure to be found in every specimen. I am confident some of these learned gentlemen in the assay business could have detected the precious metals in an Irish potato or a round of cheese for a reasonable consideration.

It was also a remarkable peculiarity of the country that the great "Comstock Lead" was discovered to exist in almost every locality, however remote or divergent from the original direction of the vein. I know a gentleman who certainly discovered a continuation of the Comstock forty miles from the Ophir mines, and at an angle of more than sixty degrees. But how could the enterprising adventurer fail to hit upon something rich, when every clod of earth and fragment of rock contained, according to the assays, both silver and gold? There was not a coyote hole in the ground that did not develop "indications." I heard of one lucky fellow who struck upon a rich vein, and organized an extensive company on the strength of having stumped his toe. Claims were even staked out and companies organized on "indications" rooted up by the squirrels and gophers. If they were not always indications of gold or silver, they were sure to contain copper, lead, or some other valuable mineral—plumbago or iridium, for instance. One man actually professed to have dis-

covered "ambergris;" but I think he must have been an old whaler.

The complications of ills which had befallen me soon became so serious that I resolved to get away by hook or crook, if it was possible to cheat the — corporate authorities of their dues. I had not come there to enlist in the service of Mammon at such wages.

Bundling up my pack one dark morning, I paid "Zip" the customary dollar, and while the evil powers were roistering about the grog-shops, taking their early bitters, made good my escape from the accursed place. Weak as I was, the hope of never seeing it again gave me nerve; and when I ascended the first elevation on the way to Gold Hill, and cast a look back over the confused mass of tents and hovels, and thought of all I had suffered there in the brief space of a few days, I involuntarily exclaimed, "If ever I put foot in that hole again, may the—"

But perhaps I had better not use strong language till I once more get clear of the Devil's Gate.



"INDICATIONS, SURE!"



GOLD MEDAL AWARDED TO GENERAL MORGAN.

THE BATTLE OF THE COWPENS.

JANUARY 18, 1781.

TO the Cowpens riding prondly, boasting loudly, rebels scorning,
 Tarleton hurried, hot and eager for the fight;
 From the Cowpens, sore-confounded, on that January morning,
 Tarleton hurried somewhat faster, fain to save himself by flight.

In the morn he scorned us rarely, but he fairly found his error,
 When his force was made our ready blows to feel;
 When his horsemen and his footmen fled in wild and pallid terror
 At the leaping of our bullets and the sweeping of our steel.

All the day before we fled them, and we led them to pursue us,
 Then at night on Thicketty Mountain made our camp;
 There we lay upon our rifles, slumber quickly coming to us,
 Spite the crackling of our camp-fires, and our sentries' heavy tramp.

Morning on the mountain border ranged in
 order found our forces,

Ere our scouts announced the coming of
 the foe;

While the hoar-frost lying near us, and the
 distant water-courses,

Gleamed like silver in the sunlight, seemed
 like silver in their glow.

Morgan ranged us there to meet them, and
 to greet them with such favor

That they scarce would care to follow us
 again:

In the rear, the Continentals—none were
 readier nor braver;

In the van, with ready rifles, steady, stern,
 our mountain men.

Washington, our trooper peerless, gay and
 fearless, with his forces

Waiting panther-like upon the foe to fall.
 Formed upon the slope behind us, where, on

raw-boned country horses,
 Sat the sudden-summoned levies brought
 from Georgia by M'Call.



DANIEL MORGAN.

Soon we heard a distant drumming, nearer coming, slow advancing—
 It was then upon the very nick of nine—
 Soon upon the road from Spartanburg we saw their bayonets glancing,
 And the morning sunlight playing on their swaying scarlet line.

HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

No. CXXIX.—FEBRUARY, 1861.—VOL. XXII.

A PEEP AT WASHOE.

BY J. ROSS BROWNE.

[Third Paper.]



CAERSON VALLEY.

AS ill-luck would have it, a perfect hurricane | sometimes in gusts so sudden and violent that swept through the cañon from Gold Hill; it was utterly impossible to make an inch of

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1861, by Harper and Brothers, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

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headway. Tents were shivered and torn to shreds all along the wayside. I saw one party sitting at breakfast, with nothing but the four posts which had originally sustained their tent and a few fragments of canvas flapping from them as a protection against the wind. Nothing could withstand its terrific force. Cabins with bush tops were unroofed; frame shanties were rent asunder, and the boards flew about like feathers; the air was filled with grit and drift, striking the face as if the great guns, which are sometimes said to blow, were loaded with duck-shot. Nor did the wind confine itself to one channel. It ranged up hill and down hill, raking the enemy fore and aft. In one place two tents were torn up, as one might say, by the roots, and carried off bodily to the top of the mountain; in another, half a dozen might be seen traveling down hill, at the rate of forty miles an hour, toward the Flowery Diggings. What became of all the unfortunate wretches who were thus summarily deprived of their local habitations I never learned. Most likely they sought refuge in the coyote holes, which, in fact, appeared to be untenanted; for I don't think coyotes could live long in such a country.

A short distance beyond Gold Hill a trail strikes off to the right, which is said to cut off four or five miles of the distance to Carson City. That would be a considerable gain to a traveler making his escape from Virginia City, and whose every step was attended with extreme physical suffering, to say nothing of the mental disquietude occasioned by his proximity to that place. Besides, it avoided the "Devil's Gate," of which I had also an intense dread. What hordes of dark and inexorable imps might be lying in wait there, with pitchforks to impale a poor fellow upon, and kegs of blasting powder to blow him up; what accounts might have to be rendered of one's stewardship at head-quarters; what particular kind of passport, sanded over with brimstone and stamped with a cloven foot, might be demanded—it was not possible to conjecture. At all events, it was safer to incur no risk. The old adage of the "longest way round" did not occur to me.

I took the trail, and was soon out of sight of Gold City. The mountains were covered with snow, not very deep, but soft and slippery. In my weak state, with a racking rheumatism and the prostrating effects of the arsenic water, the labor of making headway against the fierce gusts of wind and keeping the trail was very severe. Every few hundred yards I had to lie down in the snow and await some relief from the paroxysms of pain. After an hour or two I reached a labyrinth of hills, in which the trail became lost by the melting of the snow. I still had some idea of the general direction, and kept on. My progress, however, was very slow, and at times so difficult that it required considerable effort of mind to avoid stopping altogether, and "taking the chances," as they say, in this agreeable region. Now all this may seem very absurd, as compared with the sufferings endured

by Colonel Frémont in the Rocky Mountains, and doubtless is, in some respects. As, for instance: I was not shut up in a gorge of the mountains, a thousand miles from the habitations of man; I was not in a state of starvation, though thin enough for a starved man in all conscience; I was not at all likely to remain in any one position, however isolated, without being "spotted" by some enterprising miner in search of indications. But then, on the other hand, I was thoroughly dredged with arsenic, plumbago, copperas, and corrosive sublimate, and had neither mule nor "burro"—not even a woolly horse to carry me. Does any body pretend to say that the renowned Arctic explorers ever encountered such a series of hardships as this? Four or five months of perpetual night, with the thermometer 80° below zero, may be uncomfortable; but then the adventurer in the Polar regions has the advantage of being the furthest possible distance from certain other regions—say, from Virginia City.

About noon I came to the conclusion, that however willing the spirit might be the flesh had done its best, and was now quite used up; so I stretched myself on the snow under a cedar bush, and resolved to await what assistance Providence might send me. I was not long there when a voice in the distance caught my ear. I rose and called. In a few minutes a mysterious figure emerged from the bushes at the mouth of a cañon a few hundred feet below. I beckoned to him to come up. The singular appearance and actions of the man attracted my attention.

His face was nearly black with dirt, and his hair was long and shaggy. On his head he wore a tattered cap, tied around the chin with a blue cotton handkerchief. A tremendous blue nose, a pair of green goggles, and boots extending up to his hips, completed the oddity of his appearance. At first he approached me rapidly; but at the distance of about fifty yards he halted, as if uncertain what to do. He then put down his pack, and began to search for something in the pockets of his coat—a knife, perhaps, or a pistol. Could it be possible this fellow was a robber, who had despoiled me from the opposite mountain, and was now bent upon murder? If so, it would be as well to bring the matter to an issue at once. I was unarmed—having even lost my penknife by reason of a rent in my pocket. There were desperate characters in this wilderness, who would think nothing of killing a man for his money; and although I had only about forty dollars left, that fact could not possibly be known to this marauder. His appearance, to be sure, was not formidable; but then one should not be too hasty in judging by appearances. For all I knew he might be the Old Gentleman himself on a tour of inspection from Virginia City.

"Hallo, friend!" said I, assuming a conciliatory tone, "where are you bound?"

Upon this he approached a little closer. I soon perceived that he was a German Jew, who

had either lost his way or was prospecting for silver. As he drew near, he manifested some signs of trepidation—evidently being afraid I would rob him of his pack, in which there was probably some jewelry or old clothes. It is hardly necessary for me to say that I had no intention of robbing him. I had not come to that yet. There was no telling to what straits I might be reduced; but as long as I had a dollar in my pocket, I was determined to avoid highway robbery. Besides, it was beyond my strength at this particular crisis—a fact which the Jew seemed to recognize, for he now approached confidently. His first exclamation, on reaching the spot where I stood, was—

“Dank Gott! Ish dis de trail?”

“Where are you bound?”

“To Carson. I pe going to Carson, and I pe losht for six hours. Mein Gott!

It ish an awful country. You know the way?”

“Of course. You don't suppose I'd be here if I didn't know the way?”

“Dat is zo.”

“Come on, friend; I'm going in that direction. But don't walk very fast—I'm sick.”

“Zo? Was is de matter?”

“Poisoned.”

“Mein Gott! mein Gott! Das is awful.”

“Very—it makes a fellow so weak.”

“Mein Gott! Did dey poison you for your money?” And here the Jew put his hands behind him to see if his pack was safe.

“Oh no, it was only the water—arsenic and copperas.”

“Zó!”

This explanation apparently relieved him of a very unpleasant train of thought, for he now became quite lively and talkative. As we trudged along, chatting sociably on various matters of common interest, it occurred to me from time to time that I had seen this man's face before. The idea grew upon me. It was not a matter of particular importance, and yet I could not banish it. His voice, too, was familiar. Cer-



AN OLD FRIEND.

tainly there was something about him that possessed an uncommon interest.

“Friend,” said I, “it occurs to me I've seen you before.”

“Zo? I dink de same.”

Some moments elapsed before I could fix upon the occasion or the place. All at once the truth flashed upon me. It was Strawberry Flat! I had slept with the man! This was the identical wretch who had robbed me of my stockings! In the excitement produced by the discovery and the recollection of my blistered feet, I verily believe, had I been armed with a broad-sword or battle-axe, after the fashion of Brian de Bois Guilbert, I would have cloven him in twain.

“Ha! I remember; it was at Strawberry! You slept with me one night,” said I, in a tone of suppressed passion.

“Das is it! Das is it!” cried the Jew. “I shlept mit you at Sthrawberry!”

The effrontery of the villain was remarkable. Probably he would even acknowledge the theft.

“Friend,” said I, calmly and deliberately. “did you miss a pair of woolen stockings in the morning about the time you started?”

"Look here!" quoth the wretch, suddenly halting, "was dey yours?"

"They were!"

At this the abominable rascal doubled himself up as if in a convulsion, shook all over, and turned almost black in the face. It was his mode of laughing.

"Well, I daught dey vos yours! I daught to myself, mein Gott! how dat fellow will swear when he find his shockings gone!"

And here the convulsions were so violent that he fairly rolled over in the snow, and kicked as if in the agonies of death. It was doubtless very funny to rob a man of his valuable property and cause him days of suffering from blistered feet; but I was unable to see any wit in it till the Jew regained his breath and said:

"Vel, vel! I must sthand dhreat for dat! I know'd you'd swear when you missed 'em. Vel, vel! das is goot! Here's a flask of first-rate brandy—dhrink!"

I took a small pull—medicinally, of course. From that moment my forgiveness was complete. I harbored not a particle of resentment against the man, though I never again could have entertained implicit confidence in his integrity.

In due time we reached the banks of Carson River at a place called Dutch John's, distant about four miles from Carson City. I have an impression that John was an emigrant from Salt Lake. He had brought with him a woman to whom he was "sealed," and was the father of a thriving little family of "cotton-heads." Some of the stage-drivers who were in the habit of taking a "smile" at John's persuaded him that he was now among a moral and civilized people, and must get married. To be "sealed" to a woman was not enough. He must be spliced according to Church and State, otherwise he would wake up some fine morning and find himself hanging to a tree. John had heard that the Californians were terrible fellows, and had a mortal dread of Vigilance Committees. The stage-drivers were rather a clever set of fellows, and no way strict in morals; but then they might hang him for fun, and what would be fun to them would be death to him. There was some charm in living an immoral life, to be sure; yet it would not do to enjoy that disreputable course at the expense of a disjointed neck. On the whole, John took the advice of the stage-drivers, and got married. Next day he rode through the streets of Carson, boasting of the adroit manner in which he had escaped the vengeance of the Vigilance Committee. I am happy to add that he is now a respectable member of the community. Not that I recommend his whisky. I consider it infinitely worse than any ever manufactured out of tobacco-juice, Cayenne-pepper, and whale-oil at Port Townsend, Washington Territory, where the next worst whisky in the world is used as the common beverage of the inhabitants.

Leaving John's we came to the plain. Here the sand was heavy, and the walking very monotonous and tiresome. This part of Carson

Valley is a complete desert. Scarcely a blade of grass was to be seen. Shrivelled sage-bushes scattered here and there over the sand were the only signs of vegetation. Even the rabbits and sageshens had abandoned the country. All the open spaces resembled the precincts of a slaughterhouse. Cattle lay dead in every direction, their skulls, horns, and carcasses giving an exceedingly desolate aspect to the scene. Near the river it was a perfect mass of corruption. Hundreds upon hundreds of rotting carcasses and bleached skeletons dotted the banks or lay in great mounds, where they had gathered for mutual warmth, and dropped down from sheer starvation. The smell filled the air for miles. Thousands of buzzards had gathered in from all parts to the great carnival of flesh—presenting a disgusting spectacle as they sat gorged and stupefied on the foul masses of carrion, they scarcely deigning to move as we passed. In the sloughs bordering on the river oxen, cows, and horses were buried up to the necks where they had striven to get to the water, but from excess of weakness had failed to get back to the solid earth. Some were dead, others were dying. Around the latter the buzzards were already hovering, scarcely awaiting the extinction of life before they plunged in their ravenous beaks and tore out the eyes from the sockets. On the dry plain many hundreds of cattle had fallen from absolute starvation. The winter had been terribly severe, and the prolonged snows had covered what little vegetation there was. Those of the settlers who had saved hay enough for their stock found it more profitable to sell it at \$300 a ton and let the stock die. Horses, oxen, and cows shared the same fate. Many lingered out the winter on the few stunted shrubs to be found on the foot-hills, and died just as the grass began to appear. It was a hard country for animals of all kinds. Those that were retained for the transportation of goods were little better than living skeletons, yet the amount of labor put upon them was extraordinary. In Virginia City it was almost impossible to procure a grain of barley for love or money. Enormous prices were offered for any kind of horse-feed, by men who had come over on good horses, and who wished to keep them alive. At the rate of five dollars a day it required but a short time for the best horse to "eat his head off." Hay was sold in little wisps of a few pounds at sixty cents a pound, barley at seventy-five cents, and but little to be had even at those extravagant rates. A friend of mine from San Francisco, who arrived on a favorite horse, could get nothing in the way of feed but bread, and he paid fifty cents a loaf for a few scanty loaves about the size of biscuits to keep the poor animal alive. It was truly pitiable to see fine horses starving to death. The severity of the weather and the want of shelter were terribly severe on animals of every kind. Good horses could scarcely be sold for a tenth part of their cost—though the distance across the mountain could be performed under ordinary circumstances in two days. But where all was rush and confu-

sion there was little time to devote to the calls of humanity. Men were crazy after claims. Every body had his fortune to make in a few months. The business of jockeying had not grown into full vogue, except among a few who were always willing to sell at very high prices and buy at very low—a remarkable fact connected with dealers in horse-flesh.

The walk across Carson Valley through the heavy sand had exhausted what little of my strength remained, and I was about to give up the ghost for the third time, when a wagoner from Salt Lake gave me a lift on his wagon and enabled me to reach the town. Here my excellent friend Van Winkle gave me another chance in his bunk, and in the course of a few days I was quite recruited.

The courteous reader who has followed me so far will doubtless be disappointed that I have given so little practical information about the mines. Touching that I can only say, as Macaulay said of Sir Horace Walpole, the constitution of my mind is such that whatever is great appears to me little, and whatever is little seems great. The serious pursuits of life I regard as a monstrous absurdity on the part of mankind—especially rooting in the ground for money. The Washoe mines are nothing more than squirrel-holes on a large scale—the difference being that squirrels burrow in the ground because they live there, and men because they want to live somewhere else. I deny and repudiate the idea that any man really has any necessity for money. He only thinks he does—which is a most unaccountable error.

But then you may have some notion of going to Washoe yourself—just to try your luck. Good friend, let me advise you—don't go. Stay where you are. Devote the remainder of your life to your legitimate business, your wife, and your baby. Don't go to Washoe. If you have no money, or but little, you had better go to—any other place. It is no retreat for a poor man. The working of silver mines requires capital. A poor man can not make wages in Washoe. If you are rich and wish to speculate—a word in your ear.

"The undersigned is prepared to sell at reasonable prices" [this I quote from one of my advertisements] "valuable claims in the following companies:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| The Dead Broke, | The Fool Hardy, |
| The Rip Snorter, | The Ousel Owl, |
| The Love's Despair, | The Grab Game, |
| The Ragged End, | The Riff-Raff. |

The titles to all these claims are perfect, and the purchaser of any claim will have no difficulty whatever in holding on to it."

I hope it will not be inferred from the desponding tone of my narrative that I deny the existence of silver in Washoe, for certainly nothing is farther from my intention. That there is silver in the Comstock Lead, and in great quantities, is a well-established fact. How many thousands of tons may be there, it is impossible for me to say, but there must be an immense quantity—beyond all calculation in fact, as the ore is scattered all around the mines in great heaps, and every heap is said to be worth a fortune if it would only bear transportation to San Francisco at an expense of \$600 per ton. The best of it is sorted out and packed off on mules every day or two, partly to get the silver out of it, and partly to show the speculators in San Francisco that the mines have not yet given out. The yield per ton is estimated at from \$1200 to \$2500. During the time of my visit to the mines but little work could be done on account of the number of speculators who were engaged in trying to sell out, few of them being disposed to engage in the slow operation of mining. Some said it was on account of the weather, but I suspect the weather had very little to do with it. The following is a rough estimate of the Companies who claim to hold in the Comstock vein:

Billy Choller.....	1320 feet
Hill and Norcross.....	250 "
Goold and Curry.....	300 "
Savage.....	500 "
Washoe.....	1200 "
Belcher and Best.....	223 "
Sides Ground.....	500 "
Murphy.....	100 "
Kinney.....	60 "
Central.....	100 "
California.....	250 "
Walsh and Bryan.....	50 "
Central (again).....	150 "
Ophir.....	200 "
Mexican.....	100 "
Continuation of Ophir... ..	1200 "
Newman, Scott, and Co..	300 "
Miller Co.....	3000 "
Bob Allen and others.....	900 "

Besides about forty miles of outside claims, said to be on a direct line with the Comstock, and to be richer if any thing than the original vein.

When I left, the prices asked for a share in any of the above companies ranged from \$200 to \$2000 per running foot, and it was alleged that the purchaser could follow his running foot through all its dips, spurs, and angles. Some of these companies numbered as high as two or



HOLDING ON TO IT.



CROPPINGS.

three hundred. I know a gentleman who sold out all his assets and invested the proceeds, \$800, in 8 inches of the Central, and another who mortgaged his property to secure five feet in the Billy Choller. These gentlemen are, in all probability, at this moment worth a million of dollars each.

In short, the whole country looks black, blue, and white with silver, and where there is no silver there are croppings which indicate sulphurets or copperas.



HONEST MINER.

The Flowery Diggings were in full flower; and if they have since failed to realize the expectations that were then formed of them it must be because the Mammoth lead gave out, or Lady Bryant did not sustain her reputation.

To the honest miner I have a word to say. You are a free-born American citizen—that is, unless you were born in Ireland, which is so much the better, or in Germany, which is better still. You live by the sweat of your brow. You are God's noblest work—an honest man. The free exercise of the right of suffrage is guaranteed to you by the glorious Constitution of our common country. Upon your vote may depend the fate of millions of American freemen, nay, fate of Freedom itself, and the ultimate destiny of mankind. I do not appeal to you on the present occasion for any personal favor. Thank Fortune, I am beyond that. But in the name of common sense, in the name of our beloved State, in the name of the great Continental Congress, I do appeal to you if you have a claim in California **HOLD ON TO IT!** Don't go pirouetting about the country in search of better claims, abandoning ills that you are well acquainted with, and flying to others that you know nothing about. If you do, you may find it "a gloomy prospect."



"A GLOOMY PROSPECT."

I was now, so to say, permanently established at Carson City. In other words, it was questionable whether I should ever be able to get away without resorting to the intervention of friends, which was an alternative too revolting for human nature to bear. The only resource left was "The Agency." I had forgotten all about it hitherto, and now resolved to call at the Express office, and see what fortune might be in store for me. Surely the advertisement must have elicited various orders of a lucrative nature. Nor was I disappointed. A package of letters awaited me. Without violating any confidential obligations, I may say, in general terms, that the contents and my answers were pretty much as follows:

A.—Wishes to know what the prospect would be in Washoe for a young man of the medical profession. Has a small stock of drugs, and proposes to engage in the practice of medicine, and at the same time keep a drug store.

Answer.—Doctors are already a drug in Washoe. Brandy, Whisky, and Gin are the only medicines taken. Bring over a lot of good liquors, prescribe them at two bits a dose, and you will do well. Charge, \$10—please remit.

B.—Has about twenty head of fine American cows. Would like to sell them, and wishes a contract made in advance.

Answer.—Could find nobody who wanted to pay cash for cows. Money is scarce and cows are plenty. Have sold your cows, however, for the following valuable claims: 25 feet in the Root-Hog-or-Die; 40 feet in the Let-her-Rip; 50 feet in the Gone Case; and 100 feet in the You Bet. Charge, \$25, which please remit by Express.

C.—Would like to know if a school could be established in Washoe with any reasonable prospect of success. Has been engaged in the business for some years, and is qualified to teach the ordinary branches of a good English education, or, if desired, Greek and Latin.

Answer.—No time to waste in learning here, and no use for the English language, much less Greek or Latin. A pious missionary might find occupation. One accustomed to mining could develop what indications there are of a spiritual nature among the honest miners. No charge.

D.—Wishes to invest about \$1500 in some good claims. Has three or four friends who will go in with him. Is willing to honor a draft for that amount. Hopes I will strike something rich.

Answer.—Have bought a thousand feet for you in the very best silver-mines yet discovered. They are all in and about the Devil's Gate. Several of them are supposed to be in the Comstock Ledge. They are worth \$50,000 this moment; but if you can sell them in S. F. for an advance of \$2000 do so by all means, as the silver may give out. Charge, \$400 or nothing.

E.—Has been in bad health for some time, and thinks a trip across the mountains would do him good. Please give him some information about the road and manner of living. How about lodgings and fare? Is troubled with the bronchitis, and wishes to know how the climate would be likely to affect it.

Answer.—Hire a mule at Placerville, and if you are not too far gone the trip may benefit your bronchial tubes. The road is five feet deep by 130 miles long, and is composed chiefly of mountains, snow, and mud. Lodgings—from one to two hundred lodgers in each room, and from two to four bedfellows in each bed. Will not be troubled long with the bronchitis. The water will probably make an end of you in about two weeks. Charge—nothing.

F.—Is a lawyer by profession, and desires to establish a business in some new country. Thinks there will be some litigation at Washoe in connection with the mines. Wishes to be informed

on that point, and would be obliged for any general information.

Answer.—About every tenth man in Washoe is a lawyer. There will doubtless be abundance of litigation there before long. Would advise you to go to some other new country, say Pike's Peak, for instance. Respecting things generally, Miller and Rodgers are going up and whisky down. Charge, 50 cents. Please remit.

G.—Thinks of taking his family over to Washoe. How are the accommodations for women and children? And can servants be had?

Answer.—Keep on thinking about that or something else, but don't attempt to carry your thoughts into effect. If you do, your wife must wear the—excuse me—she must wear male apparel. For accommodations, yourself and family might possibly be able to hire one bunk two feet by six; and you might seduce a Digger Indian to remain in your domestic employ by giving him \$2 in cash and a gallon of whisky per day. Charge—nothing.

H.—Has a house and lot worth about \$10,000. Would like to trade it for some good mining claims. Can not sell the property for cash on account of a difficulty about the title; but this you need not mention, as it can probably be adjusted for a reasonable consideration.

Answer.—Have traded your house and lot for 100 feet in the Pine Nut, 50 do. in the Ousel Owl, 50 do. in the Salmon Tail, 25 in the Roaring Jack, and 25 in the Amador. These are all good claims, and it will make no difference about the title to your house and lot, as each claim in the above-mentioned companies has also several titles to it. Charge, \$500. Please remit.

I.—Is in the stove business, and understands that cast-iron stoves bring a high price in Washoe. Has some notion of sending over a consignment. Please state expenses and prospect of success.

Answer.—Stoves are very valuable in Washoe, especially cooking-stoves. It costs from 25 to 50 cents per pound to get them over on mule-back, at which prices they can be sold for claims, but not for money. If you have any very young stoves that can be planted, as the Schildbergers planted the salt, a good crop of them can be sold. Charge—nothing.

J.—Is inventor of a process for extracting silver out of the crude ore, without smelting. The machinery is simple, and would easily bear transportation. Could the patent-right be sold in Washoe?

Answer.—Nothing is more needed here than just such an invention as yours. Bring it over by all means. If you can extract silver out of the general average of the ore found here, either by smelting or otherwise, you will do a splendid business. Charge, \$50. Please remit.

K.—Understands that lumber is \$300 a thousand in Virginia City. Can be delivered at the wharf in San Francisco from the Mendocino Mills for about \$20 a thousand. Would it be practicable to get any quantity of it over, so as to make the speculation profitable?

Answer.—You are correctly informed as to the value of lumber in Washoe. A balloon might be constructed to carry over a small lot; but in case you found that mode of transportation too expensive, I know of no other way than to remove a portion of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the rear of Placerville, or run a tunnel through underneath. It is possible that the price of labor might be an obstacle to the success of either of these plans, in which event, if you can contract to put one board on the back of each man leaving San Francisco he may be able to earn his board, and you may be able to get your lumber over cheap. Charge, \$25. Please remit.

I have thus given an average specimen of the letters that came pouring in upon me by every mail. It kept me busy, as may well be supposed,

to attend to the numerous requests made by my correspondents; but the trouble was, no money came. There was a great deal, to be sure, for future collection, and as long as that was due it could not be lost by any injudicious speculation. It was some consolation, therefore, to reflect upon the large amount of capital that had accrued in the various operations of the Agency.

At this crisis, when fortune had fairly begun to smile, the weather changed again, and for days it stormed and snowed incessantly, covering up the whole valley, and blocking up every trail. A relapse of rheumatism and my poison-malady now seized me with renewed virulence. I had scarcely any rest by night or day, and soon saw that to remain would be a sure way of securing a claim to at least six feet of ground in the vicinity of Carson. The extraordinary number of



MOUNT OPHIR.



THE FLOWERY DIGGINGS.

persons who had invested in silver mines, and who were anxious to sell out in San Francisco, suggested the idea of changing my Agency to that locality. I therefore notified the public that there was a rare opportunity of selling out their claims to the best advantage; and it was not long before I was freighted down with "indications," powers of attorney, deeds, and bills of sale.

As soon as the weather permitted I set forth on my journey homeward, taking the stage to Genoa, in the hope of finding a horse or mule there upon which to cross the mountains. It was doubtful whether the trail was yet open; but a thaw had set in, and the prospect was that it would be practicable to get over in a few days. The stage from Genoa to Woodford's had been

discontinued, in consequence of the expense of feeding the horses. All the saddle trains had left before the late snow, and there was not an animal of any kind to be had except by purchase—an alternation for which I was not prepared.

In this unfortunate state of affairs there was nothing left but to try it again on foot. It was with great difficulty that I could walk at all, much less carry my blankets and the additional weight of a heavy bundle of "croppings." The prospect of remaining at Genoa, however, was too gloomy to be thought of. So I sold my blankets for a night's lodging and set out the next morning for Woodford's. By dint of labor and perseverance I accomplished about eight miles that day. It was dark night when I reached a small farm-house on the road-side. Here



RETURN FROM WASHOE.

a worthy couple lived, who gave me comfortable lodgings, and cooked up such a luxurious repast of broiled chicken, toast, and tea, that I determined, if practicable, to remain a day or two, in order to regain my strength for the trip across the mountain.

The kindness and hospitality of these excellent people had the desired effect. In two days I was ready to proceed. Fortunately an ox-wagon was going to Woodford's for lumber, and I contracted with the driver, a good-humored negro, to give me a lift there for the sum of fifty cents.

I had the pleasure of meeting several San Francisco friends on the road, and gave them agreeable tidings of the mines. The trail had just been opened. A perfect torrent of adventurers came pouring over, forming an almost unbroken line all the way from Placerville. By this time the spring was well advanced and the excitement was at its height. The news from below was, that the whole State would soon be

depopulated. Every body was coming—women, children and all. Of course I wished them luck, but it was a marvel to me what they would do when they reached Washoe. Already there were eight or ten thousand people there, and not one in fifty had any thing to do or could get employment for board and lodging. Companies were leaving every day for More's Lake and Walker's River, and the probability was that there would be considerable distress if not absolute suffering. But it was useless to talk. Every adventurer must have a look at the diggings for himself. There must be luck in store for him if for nobody else. For my part I had taken a look and was satisfied.

The ox-team traveled very slowly, so that there was a good opportunity of seeing people pass both ways. The difference in the expression of the incoming and the outgoing was very remarkable; being about the difference between a man with fifty dollars in his pocket and one



OUTGOING AND INCOMING.

who wished to borrow that amount. There was that canny air of confidence about the former which betokens the possession of some knowledge touching the philosopher's stone not shared by mankind generally. About the latter there was a mingled expression of sadness and sarcasm as if they were rather inclined to the opinion that some people had not yet seen the elephant.

As my ox-carriage crept along uneasily over the rocky road, I was hailed from behind, "Hello dare! Shop!" It was my friend the Jew again! I had lost sight of him in Carson, and now by some fatality he was destined to be my companion again.

"Mein Gott! I'm tired valking. Can't you give me a lift?" The driver was willing provided I had no objection. Now I had freely forgiven this man for the robbery of my stockings. I was not uncharitable enough to refuse help to a tired wayfarer; yet I had a serious objection to his company under existing circumstances. His boots were nearly worn out, and mine had but recently been purchased in Carson. If this fellow could embezzle my stockings and afterward unblushingly confess the act, what security could I have on the journey for the safety of my boots? I knew if he once started in with me he would never relinquish his claim to my company until we reached Placerville; for the fellow was rather of a sociable turn, and liked to talk. It seemed best, therefore, under all circumstances, to have a distinct understanding at once. The treaty was soon negotiated. On my part it was stipulated that Israel should ride to Woodford's on the ox-wagon, provided he paid his own fare; that we should cross the mountain together for mutual protection, provided he would deposit in my hands his watch or a \$10 gold piece, as security for the safety of my boots; and, finally, that he would bind himself by the most solemn obligations of honor not to steal both the security and the boots. To all of which the Jew assented with one of those internal convulsions which betokened great satisfaction in the arrangement. The watch was

covered with pewter, as I discovered when he handed it to me; but I had no doubt it was worth eight or ten dollars. Besides, the treaty made no mention of the quality of the watch. It might possibly be an excellent time-piece, and at all events seemed to be worth a pair of boots.

Toward evening we arrived at Woodford's. Between two and three hundred travelers from the other side of the mountain had already gotten in, and it was represented that there was a line of pedestrians all the way over to Strawberry. The rush for supper was tremendous. Not even the famous Heenan and Sayers contest could compare with it, for here every body went in—or at least tried to get in. At the sixth round I succeeded in securing a favorable position, and when the battle commenced was fortunate enough to be crushed into a seat.

In the way of sleeping there was a general spread-out up stairs. By assuming a confidential tone with the proprietor I contrived to get a mattress and a pair of blankets. The Jew slept alongside on his pack, with a covering of loose coats. Nature's balmy restorer quickly put an end to all the troubles of the day, notwithstanding the incessant noise kept up throughout the night.

In the morning I awoke much refreshed. It was about seven o'clock and time to start. I turned to arouse my friend Israel, but to my surprise found that he had already taken his departure. A horrible suspicion seized me. Had he also taken— Yes! of course! my boots were gone too! And the security? The watch? I looked under my pillow. Miserable wretch! he had also taken the watch. I might have known it! I was a fool for trusting him. When I picked up the old pair of boots bequeathed to me as a token of remembrance by this depraved man—when I held them up to the light and examined them critically—when I reflected upon the journey before me, it was enough to bring tears to the sternest human eye.

No matter! I would catch the dastardly wretch on the trail. If ever I laid hands upon him again, so help me— But what is the use of swearing. No man ever caught another in this world with such a pair of boots on his feet—and here I examined them again—never! One might as well attempt to walk in a pair of condemned fire-buckets.

There was no help for it but to await some chance of getting over on horseback. Fortunately, a saddle-train which had passed down to Genoa during the previous day returned a little after daylight. For the sum of \$30, cash in advance, I secured an unoccupied horse—the poorest animal perhaps ever ridden by mortal man. There is no good reason that I am aware of why people engaged in the horse-business should



THE JEW'S BOOTS.

always select for my use the refuse of their stock ; but such has invariably been their practice. I have never yet been favored with a horse that was not lame, halt, or blind, or otherwise physically afflicted.

I had not ridden more than a mile from Woodford's before I discovered that the miserable hack upon which I was mounted traveled diagonally—like a lugger beating against a head-wind. His fore feet were well enough—they traveled on the trail ; but his hind feet were continually undertaking to luff up a little to windward. When it is borne in mind that the trail was over a bank of snow from eight to ten feet deep, and not more than a foot wide, the inconvenience of that mode of locomotion will at once be perceived. Every few hundred yards the hind feet got off the trail, and went down with a sudden lurch that kept me in constant apprehension of being buried alive in the snow. Another serious difficulty was, that my horse, owing perhaps to the defect in his hind legs, had no capacity for short turns ; so that whenever the trail suddenly diverged from its direct course he invariably brought up against a rock, stump, or bank of snow.

I appealed to the captain or commander of the train to give me a better animal, but he assured me positively this was the very best in the whole lot ; and that I would find him peculiarly adapted to mountain travel, where it was often an advantage for an animal to hold on to an upper trail with his fore feet while his hind ones were searching for another down below. In short, on this account solely he had named him "Guyascutas."

As there seemed to be no way of impressing the captain with a different opinion of the merits of Guyascutas, I was obliged to make the best of a bad bargain, and jog on as fast as spurs, blows, and entreaties could effect that result.

In reference to the Jew, whom I expected to overtake, and for whom I kept a sharp look-out, it may be as well to state at once that I never again put eyes on him. Whether he secreted himself behind some tree or rock till the saddle-train passed, or, overcome by remorse for the dastardly act he had committed, cast himself headlong over some precipice, I have never been able to ascertain. He is a miserable wretch at best. In view of the future I would not for all the wealth of the Rothschilds stand in his—Well, yes, for that much money I might stand in his boots, provided no others were to be had ; but I should regret extremely to be guilty of such an act toward any fellow-traveler as he had committed.

It was four o'clock when we got under way from the Lake House. A mule-driver from the other side of the divide had cautioned us against starting. There had been several snow-slides during the day, and it was only a few hours since the trail had been cut through. A large train of mules heavily laden must now be on the way down the grade, and fifteen other trains had left Strawberry since noon.

Those who have passed over the "Grade" can best appreciate our position. Two of our horses had already died of starvation and hard usage. There was no barley or feed of any kind to be had at the Lake House. The snow was rapidly melting, and avalanches might be expected at any moment. Only a day or two ago one of these fearful slides had occurred, sweeping all before it. Two mules and a horse were carried over the precipice and dashed to atoms, and the driver had barely escaped with his life.

It was considered perilous to stop on any part of the Grade. The trail was not over a foot wide, being heavily banked up on each side by the accumulated snow. Passing a pack train was very much like running a muck. The Spanish mules are so well aware of their privileges when laden, that they push on in defiance of all obstacles, often upsetting the unwary traveler by main force. I was struck with a barrel of whisky in one of the narrow passes some time previously and knocked nearly senseless, so that I had good cause to remember their prowess.

It was put to the vote whether we should make the attempt or remain, and finally, after much discussion, referred to our captain. He was evidently determined to go on at all hazards, having a stronger interest in the lives of his horses than any of the party.

At the word of command we mounted and put spurs to our jaded animals.

"Now, boys," said the captain, "keep together! Your lives depend upon it! Watch out for the pack trains, and when you see them coming hang on to a wide place! Don't come in contact with the pack-mules or you'll go over the Grade certain."

There was no need of caution. Every nerve was strained to make the summit as soon as possible. It should be mentioned that the "Grade" is the Placerville state road, cut in the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevadas, and winding upward around each rib of the mountain for a distance of two miles. It was now washed away in many places by the melting of the snow, and some of the bridges across the ravines were in a very bad condition. From the first main elevation there is still another rise of two or three miles to the top of the divide, but this part is open and the ascent is comparatively easy. In meeting the pack trains the only hope of safety is to make for a point where the road widens. These places of security occur only three or four times in the entire ascent of the Grade. To be caught between them on a stubborn or unruly horse is almost certain destruction at this season of the year.

The only alternative is to dismount with all speed, wheel your horse round, and if possible get back to some place of security.

In about half an hour we made a point of rocks where the trail was bare. Our captain gave the order to dismount, and proceeded a short distance ahead to reconnoitre. The whole space occupied by our twelve horses and riders was not



SNOW SLIDE.

over six or eight feet wide by about thirty in length. Should any of the animals become stampeded they were bound to go over. The tracks of several which had recently been pushed over the precipice by the pack trains were still visible. Our captain returned presently with news that a train was in sight. Soon we heard the tinkling of the bell attached to the leader, and then the clattering of the hoofs as the mules descended with their heavy burdens. One by one they passed. Whisky, gin, and brandy again! Barrels, half-barrels, and kegs! The vaqueros made the cliffs resound with their Carambas and Carajas, their Doña Marias and Santa Sofias!—a language apparently well understood by the mules. This was a train of forty mules, all laden with liquors for the thirsty miners. The vaqueros reported another train within half a mile of twenty-five mules, and others on the Grade.

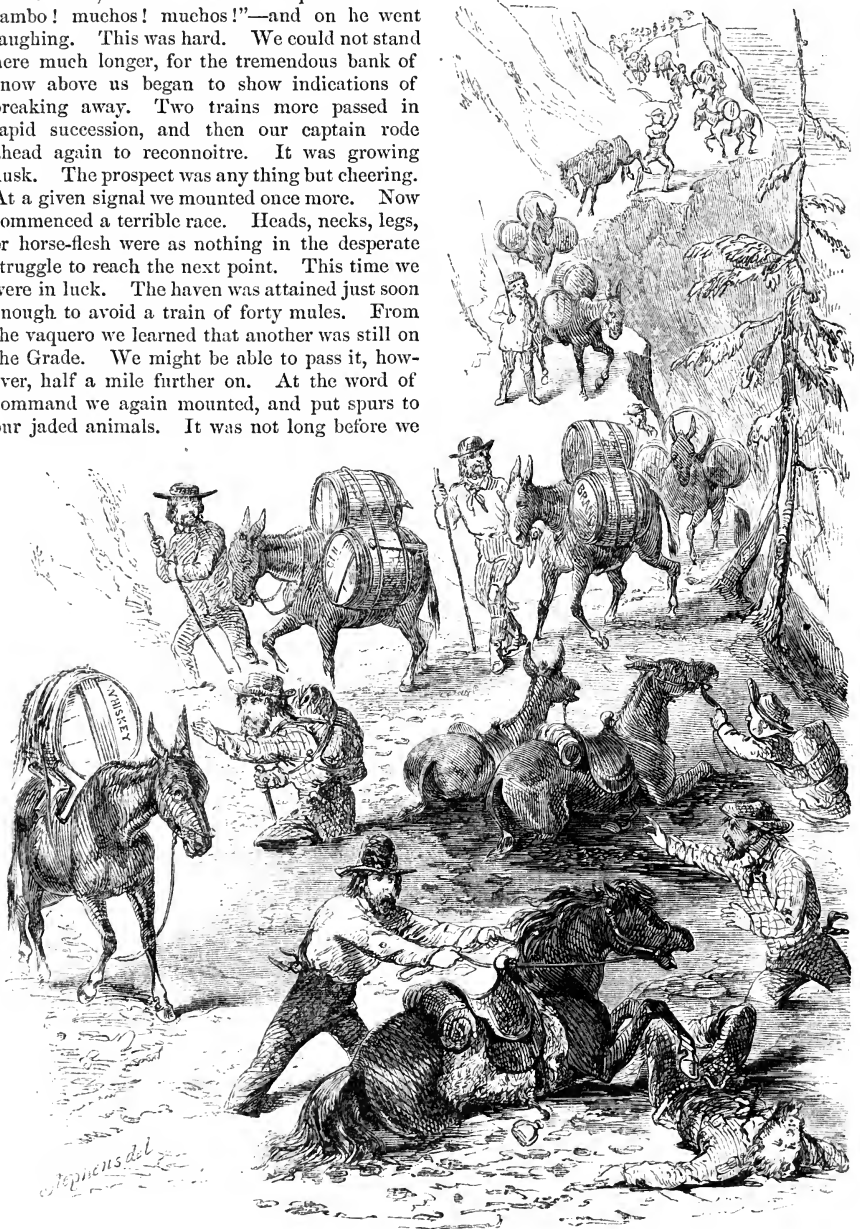
After another train had passed, our captain gave the word to mount and “cut for our lives!” Scarcely five seconds elapsed before we were all off, dashing helter-skelter up the trail. The horses plunged and stumbled over the rocks, slush, and mud in a manner truly pitiable for them and dangerous for us. In some places the mules had cut through for hundreds of yards, and the trail was perfectly honey-combed. But there was no time for humanity. Dashing the spurs into the bleeding sides of our animals, we pushed on as if all the evil powers of Virginia City were after us.

“Go it, boys!” our captain shouted; “neck or nothing! I see the train! Two hundred yards more and we’re all safe!—Caraja! Here’s another train right on us!”

It was a palpable truth! The pack-mules came lumbering down around a point not fifty yards from us.

"Dismount all! Wheel! and cut back for your lives!" This was the order. In a moment we were all plunging rantically in the snow. Some of the horses were stampeded, and one man had gotten his riata around his leg. The mules had also commenced a stampede, when, by dint of shouting, plunging, and struggling, we got clear of them, and went tearing down the trail to our old station. The train soon passed us. Whisky again, of course. "How many trains more, Señor?"—to the vaquero. "Carambo! muchos! muchos!"—and on he went laughing. This was hard. We could not stand here much longer, for the tremendous bank of snow above us began to show indications of breaking away. Two trains more passed in rapid succession, and then our captain rode ahead again to reconnoitre. It was growing dusk. The prospect was any thing but cheering. At a given signal we mounted once more. Now commenced a terrible race. Heads, necks, legs, or horse-flesh were as nothing in the desperate struggle to reach the next point. This time we were in luck. The haven was attained just soon enough to avoid a train of forty mules. From the vaquero we learned that another was still on the Grade. We might be able to pass it, however, half a mile further on. At the word of command we again mounted, and put spurs to our jaded animals. It was not long before we

heard the tinkling of a bell. Now for it! halt! The mules were on us before we could turn; and here commenced a scene which baffles all description. Some of us were overturned, horses and all, in the banks of snow. Others sprang from their horses and let them struggle on their own account. All had to break a way out of the trail. The mules were stampeded, and kicked, brayed, and rolled by turns. The vaqueros were in a perfect frenzy of rage and



THE GRADE.

terror combined—shrieking Maladetto! Carambo! and Caraja! till it seemed as if the reverberation must break loose the snow from above and send an avalanche down on top of us all. Bridles got foul of stray legs and jerked the owners on their backs; riatas were twisted and wound around horses, mules, and whisky-barrels; packs went rolling hither and thither; men and animals kicked for their bare lives; heads, legs, and bodies were covered up in the snow-drifts; and nobody knew what every body else was doing, or what he was doing himself. In short, the scene was altogether very lively, and would have been amusing had it not been intensified by the imminent risk of slipping over the precipice. It was at least a thousand feet down into Lake Valley, and a man might just as well be kicked on the head by twelve frantic horses and twenty-five vicious mules as undertake a trip down there by the short cut.

All troubles must end. Ours ended when the animals gave out for want of breath. Upon picking up our scattered regiment, with all arms and equipments used in the *melée*, we found the result as follows: Dead, none; wounded by kicks, scratches, sprains, and bruises, six: mortally frightened, the whole party, inclusive of our captain; lost a keg of whisky, which some say went down to Lake Valley; but I have my suspicions where that keg went, and how it was secreted.

From this point over the summit we met several more pack trains, and had an occasional tumble in the snow. Nothing more serious occurred. It was quite dark as we commenced our descent. The road here was a running stream of mud, obstructed by slippery rocks, ruts, stumps, and dead animals. It was a marvel to me how we ever reached the bottom without broken bones. My horse stumbled about every hundred yards, but never fell more than three-quarters down. Somehow people rarely get killed in this country, unless shot by revolvers or bad whisky.

The crowds were thicker than ever at Strawberry. From all accounts the excitement had only just commenced. Five thousand were represented to be on the road from the various diggings throughout California. I had bargained for a bed, and was enjoying the idea of a good supper—the savory odor of which came through the cracks of the bar-room door—when our captain announced that he could get no feed for his animals, and we must ride on to "Dick's," fourteen miles more. This was pretty tough on a sick man. The ride since morning had been quite hard enough to try the strength and temper of a well man; but add fourteen miles to that, of a dark night and raining into the bargain, and the sum total is not agreeable. It was useless to remonstrate. The captain was inflexible. He could not see his horses starve. One was just giving his last kick, and three more were about to "go in." I might stay if I pleased, suggested the captain, but the horses must go on. As I had paid thirty dollars for

the ride, and had barely enough left to get to San Francisco, there was no alternative but to mount. By this time three of the party were so ill as to be scarcely able to sit in their saddles.

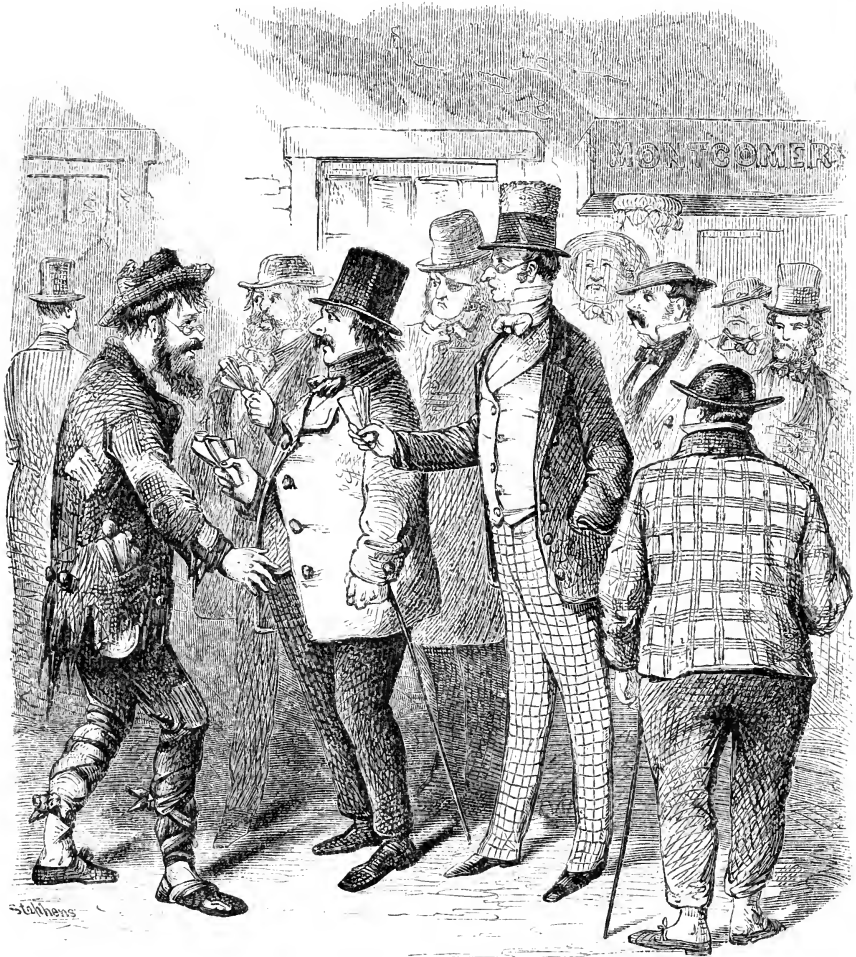
It is wonderful how much one can endure when there is nobody at hand to care a pin whether he lives or dies. I rather incline to the opinion that many people in this world die from the kindness and sympathy of friends, who, if thrown upon their own resources, would weather it out.

I have an impressive recollection of the fourteen miles from Strawberry to "Dick's." My horse, Gyascutas, broke down about half-way. The rest of the party pushed on. About the same time the old tortures of rheumatism and neuralgia assailed me in full force. It was pitch dark. There was no stopping-place nearer than "Dick's." The weather was cold, and a drenching rain had now penetrated my clothes to the skin.

A distinct recollection of my feelings a month ago, as I tramped along over this road with my pack on my back, afforded me ample material for philosophical reflection. Was it now somebody else—some decrepit old fogey who had lost his all, and had nothing more to expect in this world? Or could it possibly be the glowing enthusiast, just freed from the trammels of office, and inspired by visions of mountain life, liberty, and wealth? If it was the same—and there could hardly be any mistake about it, unless some mysterious translation of the spirit into some other body had taken place at Virginia City—the visions of mountain life, liberty, and unbounded riches were certainly of a very different character.

In addition to the peculiarity in the hind-quarters of Guyascutas, which caused him always to take two trails at the same time, I had now reason to suspect that he was entirely blind of one eye, and afflicted with a cataract on the other. Every hundred yards or so he walked off the road, and brought up in some deep cavity or against a pile of rocks. The mud in many places was up to his haunches, and if there was a comparatively dry spot any where in existence, he was sure to avoid it. I think he disliked me on account of the spurring I gave him on the Grade, and wanted to get rid of me in some way; or perhaps he considered his own course of life beyond further endurance.

The result of all the stumbling, and running into deep pits, banks of rock, and mud-holes, was that I had to get down and walk the remainder of the way. If a conviction had not taken possession of my mind that the captain would compel me to pay for the horse, in the event of failure to produce him, I would cheerfully have left him to his fate, and proceeded alone; but under the circumstances I thought it best to lead him. At last the welcome lights hove in sight. It was not long before I was snugly housed at Dick's, where a good cup of tea brought life and hope back again. This, I



RETURN TO SAN FRANCISCO.

may safely say, was my hardest day's experience of travel in any country.

Next day poor Guyascutus was so far gone on his long journey that I had to leave him at a stable on the road-side, and proceed on foot. By night I was within six miles of Placerville. Here I overtook a fellow-traveler, and bargained with him for his horse. From Placerville, by stage to Sacramento, the journey is devoid of interest. I arrived at San Francisco in due time, a little the worse for the wear, but still equal to any new emergency that might arise.

The citizens of San Francisco were on the *qui vive* for news from Washoe. Almost every man with a dollar to spare, and many who had nothing to spare, had invested, to a greater or less extent, in claims—from thousands of feet down to a few inches. Conflicting accounts had recently come down. The public mind was in a state of feverish excitement. Was

Washoe a humbug, or was it not? Was there silver there, or was it all sham? What was the Ophir worth at this time? How about the Billy Choller and the Miller? These were but a few of the questions asked me on Montgomery Street. It required an hour to walk fifty yards, so great was the pressure for news. Could I tell any thing about the Winnemuck, or the Pine-Nut, or the Rogers? Did I happen to know what the Wake-up-Jake was worth in Washoe? What about the Lady Bryant—was it true that it had gone down? Whereabouts was the Jim Crack located, and what was Dead Broke worth? In short, I looked over more deeds, and answered more questions of a varied and indefinite nature, in the brief space of three days, than had ever been put to and answered by any one man before.

The editor of the *Bulletin*, who had made a flying visit to Washoe, and in whose company I

had traveled down from Placerville, commenced about this time a series of articles, in which he told some startling truths. Base metal had been found in the Comstock; to what extent it prevailed nobody could tell. If the Comstock should prove to be worthless, what hope was there for the "outside claims?"

The news spread like wild-fire. A panic seized upon the multitudes whose funds were invested in Washoe. Men hurried about the streets in search of purchasers of Washoe stock; but purchasers were nowhere to be found. Every body wanted to sell. The Comstock suddenly fell from one thousand down to five dollars per foot, and no sales at that. Miller went down fifty per cent.; and the Great Outside could scarcely be given away at any price! Alas! had it come to this? The gigantic Washoe speculation "gone in," and none so poor to do it reverence!

Softly! A word in your ear, reader! They are only "bucking it down" for purposes of speculation. The keen men who know a thing or two are buying up secretly. The silver is there, and it must come out. All this cry about base metal is "a dodge" to frighten the timid. If you have claims, hold on to them; they will be up again presently.

For my part, I thought it best to leave San Francisco before my correspondents—for whom, it will be remembered, I had executed some business in Washoe—retracted their good opinion of my sagacity. There was no chance at this crisis to sell the various claims with which I had been commissioned at Carson City. Capitalists were short of funds. The money market was laboring under a depression. The liver of the body politic was in a state of collapse. I went to the principal bankers, but failed to accomplish any thing. They even refused to lend money on unquestionable security.

In view of all the circumstances, I determined to visit Europe. If the moneyed men of the Old World could only be satisfied of the ex-

tent, variety, and magnificence of the investments to be made in the New, they would not hesitate to open negotiations with an agent direct from Washoe.

FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN, *January, 1861.*

You will perceive from my address, most esteemed reader, that I am now established at one of the best points for pecuniary transactions on the Continent of Europe. I have seen many of the wealthy burghers of Frankfort, and am pleased to say that they manifest a very friendly disposition. As yet they do not quite understand the nature of the proposed securities; but I have great confidence in their sagacity. My negotiations with the Rothschilds have been of the most amicable character. They have gone so far as to express the opinion that Washoe must be a remarkable country; and yesterday, when I proposed to sell them fifty feet in the Gone Case, and forty in the Roaring Grizzly, for the sum of one hundred thousand florins, they smiled so politely, and withal looked so completely puzzled, that I considered it best not to force an immediate answer. You are aware, of course, that in important negotiations of this kind it is judicious to let the opposite party sleep a night or two over your proposition. That the Rothschilds are at present a little wary of any investment in Washoe is quite natural. The nomenclature is new to them. They have never before heard of Roaring Grizzly and Gone Case silver mines. But if that should prove to be their only objection, I have no doubt they will ultimately purchase to the extent of several millions. If they do, I shall be happy to negotiate sales for a reasonable commission, to be paid strictly in advance. My publishers will, I am confident, forward any letter to my address. The postage must be pre-paid. The rates, which are somewhat high, can be ascertained by inquiry at the post-offices in San Francisco, New Orleans, Saint Louis, Boston, and New York.



READING EXTRA BULLETIN.

